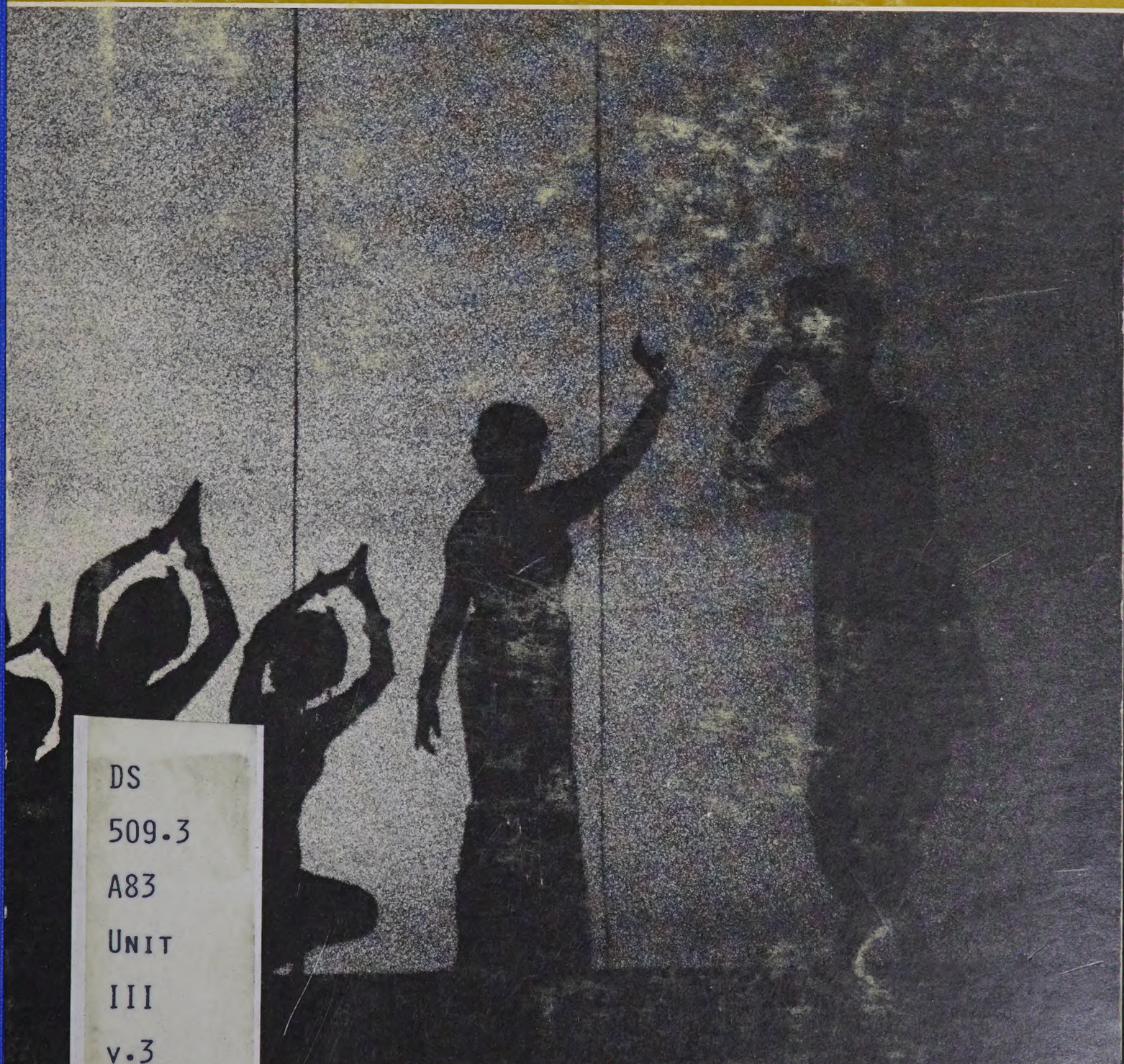
University Of Alberta
0 0001 86712 14

ASIAN STUDIES INQUIRY PROGRAM

Man and Woman in Asia



DS
509.3
A83
UNIT
III
v.3

CURR

Robin J. McKeown

Ex libris
universitatis
albertaensis

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2020 with funding from
University of Alberta Libraries

https://archive.org/details/asianstudiesinqu03mich_1

ASIAN STUDIES INQUIRY PROGRAM

Man and Woman in Asia

Robin J. McKeown

John U. Michaelis

Robin J. McKeown

Coordinators
Asian Studies Inquiry Program

Co-Directors
Asian Studies Curriculum Project
University of California, Berkeley

Field Educational Publications, Incorporated

A Subsidiary of Field Enterprises, Incorporated

San Francisco, California Palatine, Illinois Berkeley Heights, New Jersey Atlanta, Georgia Dallas, Texas

Acknowledgments

For permission to use material in this book, acknowledgment is made to the following publishers and authors:

"Marriage in Village India" by Kamala Markandaya. Copyright © 1954 by The John Day Company, Inc. Reprinted from *Nectar in a Sieve* by Kamala Markandaya by permission of The John Day Company, Inc., publisher. "The Old and the New in Japanese Marriage," "Haruko" as part of "Loyalty of the Japanese Wife," and "Japan" as part of "Parents-in-Law in China and Japan" by Pearl Buck. Copyright © 1966 by Pearl S. Buck and Lyle Kenyon Engel. Reprinted by permission of Simon & Schuster, Inc. "Arranging a Marriage in Japan" by Edward Norbeck. Abridged from pages 70–73 from Chapter Three from *Changing Japan* by Edward Norbeck. Copyright © 1965 hy Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc. Abridged by permission of Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc. "Widowhood in Eighteenth-Century India" by John Corneille. Reprinted from *Journal of My Service in India* by John Corneille, by permission of The Folio Society Ltd., London. "Lament of a Woman from Java" by Raden Adjeng Kartini. Reprinted from *Letters of a Javanese Princess* by Raden Adjeng Kartini. Translated from the Dutch by Agnes Louise Symmers. Edited and with an Introduction by Hildred Geertz. By permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright 1920 by Agnes Louise Symmers. Copyright renewed 1948 by Agnes Louise Symmers. Copyright © 1964 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. "The Roles of the Chinese Female" by C. K. Yang. From *Chinese Communist Society: The Family and the Village* by C. K. Yang. Copyright © 1959 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "China" as part of "Parents-in-Law in China and Japan" by Francis L. K. Hsu. From *Americans and Chinese: Two Ways of Life,* Francis L. K. Hsu, N.Y.: Henry Schuman, 1953. Copyright now held by the author. (Revised and updated edition, *Purpose and Fulfillment in Great Civilizations.* N.Y.: Natural History Press, 1969.) "Six College Girls in Communist China" by Edgar Snow. From *The Other Side of the River* by Edgar Snow. Copyright © 1962 hy Edgar Snow. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

Picture Credits

Front Cover—Man and woman dancing, Marc Riboud, Magnum.
Title Page—Formal wedding ceremony in Japan, Rapho Guillumette.

Page 6: Gillhausen, Black Star. Page 14: C. J. Coulson, Gendreau. Page 24: Charles Phelps Cushing. Page 27: Keystone. Page 29: United Nations. Page 38: René Burri, Magnum. Page 40: Werner Bischof, Magnum. Page 56: Marilyn Silverstone, Magnum. Page 60: Marc Riboud, Magnum.

Copyright © 1969 by Field Educational Publications, Incorporated. All rights reserved. This book may not be reproduced in whole or in part in any form without written permission from the publishers.

LIBRARY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Contents

Introduction 7

Traditional Marriage Patterns 9

1. Marriage in Village India 10
2. The Decision to Marry in Vietnam 13
3. The Old and the New in Japanese Marriage 15
4. Arranging a Marriage in Japan 18

Traditional Roles in the Asian Marriage 21

5. Widowhood in Eighteenth-Century India 22
6. The Lament of a Woman from Java 25
7. The Obedient Wife in Village India 28
8. Loyalty of the Japanese Wife 30

Traditional Roles in the Asian Family 33

9. The Birth of Sons and Daughters 34
10. The Roles of the Chinese Female 37
11. Parents-in-Law in China and Japan 39
12. Roles in a Hindu Family 43

Changing Roles in the Asian Family 51

13. The New Woman in India 52
14. A Career-Minded Mother in Ceylon 55
15. A Chinese Family in Singapore 57
16. Six College Girls in Communist China 59

Conclusions 63

Suggested Readings 64

This upper-caste Indian prospective bride is now ready and waiting for the wedding ceremony.

Introduction

Man and Woman in Asia primarily focuses on the role of women in various Asian families while considering the role of other members of the family and their relationships among each other. The readings to follow present information that should enable you to explore the cultural rules which for centuries have guided the Asian woman and her family. By inquiring into the complexities and consequences of these cultural forces, you should not only gain insight into the factors that determine the paths of life which the Asian woman must follow, you should also be able to increase your awareness of the critical elements that establish and maintain the living patterns of people throughout Asia. *Man and Woman in Asia* extends far beyond its Asian setting, for it is a cultural study that allows you to discover more about the forces determining the general behavior of people everywhere. The readings should encourage you to reflect on what establishes the standards for appropriate human behavior. Does the individual, his family, or his immediate community decide what is right or wrong? Does some rather remote individual, group, or institution within the society make such cultural decisions? Or are there certain universal standards that apply to all human beings?

Traditional Marriage Patterns

Nearly all of the cultural groups in the world have developed rather formal and elaborate responses to birth, marriage, and death. The selection of a marriage partner and the marriage itself are, of course, as important in Asia as in any other region. Marriage customs and rituals deeply rooted in the broad and inclusive cultural traditions of Asia often tend to appear exotic and mystifying to Westerners. You might have heard reports from India about the betrothal of an eight-year-old boy or the marriage of a thirteen-year-old girl. Possibly you have been told about parents in Southeast Asia or Japan selecting a young man's future wife before he has had a chance to see her, much less to approve of her. Perhaps you have heard about wives in China or Pakistan who are required to obey all of their husband's requests and orders as laws not to be challenged. This section of readings will tend to strip away some of the exaggerated statements about the concept of marriage in Asia, but, more important, it will present you with valuable information concerning the procedures, regulations and rituals associated with Asian marriages. This section of readings should enable you to begin your inquiry into the impact of traditional customs and practices on the roles and relationships of the twentieth-century Asian woman and her family.

Reading one†

Marriage in Village India

In nineteenth-century India, roughly one girl in every four between the ages of five and fifteen was already married. These girls were below the minimum age for marriage required by law in most Western countries today. It is interesting to note, though, that in medieval Europe child betrothals were not unknown. In 1955, the Hindu Marriage Act established the legal age for marriage at eighteen for the boy and fifteen for the girl, but betrothals often take place much earlier. The traditional marriage is usually arranged through a go-between with little consideration for the prospective couple's immediate wishes, and the wedding is often celebrated with elaborate festivities.

Kamala Markandaya, a native of southern India, accurately describes in fictional form some of the necessary preparations and activities leading to the betrothal and marriage of a young Indian girl.

I kept Ira as long as I could but when she was past fourteen her marriage could be delayed no longer, for it is well known with what speed eligible young men are snapped up; as it was, most girls of her age were already married or at least bethrothed. The choice of go-between was not easy to make: Kali was the nearest to hand and the obvious one, but she was garrulous and self-opinionated: rejection of the young man she selected would involve a tedious squabble. Besides, she had sons of her own and might well consider them suitable husbands, which I certainly could not, for they owned no land. Old Granny, on the other hand, would be the ideal go-between: she was old and experienced, knew very well what to look for and never lacked patience; but for some years now I had not traded with her and she might with every justification refuse to act for me. But in the end it was to her I went.

"A dowry of one hundred rupees," I said. "Do your best for me and I shall be ever in your debt. This I ask you," I said, looking straight at her, "although Biswas takes my produce and for you there has been nothing."

† Kamala Markandaya, *Nectar in a Sieve* (New York: The John Day Company, Inc., 1954).

"I bear you no grudge, Rukmani," she replied. "Times are hard and we must do what we can for ourselves and our children. I will do my best."

Thereafter never a week went by but she brought news of this boy or that, and she and I and Nathan spent long hours trying to assess their relative merits. At last we found one who seemed to fulfill our requirements: he was young and well favoured, the only son of his father from whom he would one day inherit a good portion of land.

"They will expect a large dowry," I said regretfully. "One hundred rupees will not win such a husband, we have no more."

"She is endowed with beauty," Old Granny said. "It will make up for a small dowry—in this case."

She was right. Within a month the preliminaries were completed, the day was fixed. Ira accepted our choice with her usual docility; if she fretted at the thought of leaving us and her brothers she showed no sign. Only once she asked a little wistfully how frequently I would be able to visit her, and, although I knew such trips would have to be very rare since her future home lay some ten villages away, I assured her not a year would pass without my going to see her two or three times.

"Besides, you will not want me so often," I said. "This home, your brothers, are all you have known so far, but when you have your own home and your own children you will not miss these. . . ."

She nodded slightly, making no comment, yet I knew how bruised she must be by the imminent parting. My spirit ached with pity for her, I longed to be able to comfort her, to convince her that in a few months' time her new home would be the most significant part of her life, the rest only a preparation . . . but before this joy must come the stress of parting, the loneliness of beginning a new life among strangers, the strain of the early days of marriage; and because I knew this the words would not come. . . .

Wedding day. Women from the village came to assist. Janaki, Kali, many I hardly knew. We went with Ira to the river and, when she was freshly bathed, put on her the red sari I had worn at my own wedding. Its rich heavy folds made her look more slender than she was, made her look a child. . . . I darkened her eyes with kohl and the years fell away more; she was so pitifully young I could hardly believe she was to be married, today.

The bridegroom arrived; his parents, his relatives, our friends, the priests. The drummer arrived and squatted outside awaiting permission to begin; the fiddler joined him. There should have been other musicians—a flautist, a harmonium player, but we could not afford these. Nathan would have nothing we could not pay for. No debts, he insisted, no debts. But I grudged Ira nothing: had I not saved from the day of her birth so that she should marry well? Now I brought out the stores I had put by month after month—rice and dhal and ghee, jars of oil, betel leaf, araca nuts, chewing tobacco and copra.

"I didn't know you had so much," said Nathan in amazement.

"And if you had there would be little enough," I said with a wink at the women, "for men are like children and must grab what they see."

I did not wait for his retort, hearing only the laughter that greeted his sally, but went out to speak to the drummer.

Arjun, my eldest son, was sitting next to the man, cautiously tapping the drum with three fingers as he had been shown.

"There is plenty of food inside," I said to him. "Go and eat while there is still some left."

"I can eat no more," he replied. "I have been feasting all day."

Nevertheless he had made provision for the morrow: I saw in his lap a bundle bulging with food; sugar syrup and butter had soaked through the cloth patchily.

"Join your brothers," I said, hoisting him up. "The drummer is going to be busy."

He ran off, clinging tightly to his bundle. The wedding music began. Bride and groom were sitting uneasily side by side, Ira stiff in the heavy embroidered sari, white flowers in her hair, very pale. They did not look at each other. About them were packed some fourteen or fifteen people—the hut could hold no more. The remainder sat outside on palm leaves the boys had collected.

"What a good match," everybody said. "Such a fine boy, such a beautiful girl, too good to be true." It was indeed. Old Granny went about beaming: it was she who had brought the two parties together; her reputation as a matchmaker would be higher than ever.

So they were married. As the light faded two youths appeared bearing a palanquin for the newly married couple, lowered it at the entrance to the hut for them to step into. Now that it was time to go, Ira looked scared, she hesitated a little before entering: but already a dozen willing hands had lifted her in. The crowd, full of good feeling, replete with food and drunk with the music, vicariously excited, pressed round, eagerly thrusting over their heads garland after garland of flowers; the earth was spattered with petals. In the midst of the crush, Nathan and I, Nathan holding out his hands to Ira in blessing, she with dark head bent low to receive it. Then the palanquin was lifted up, the torchbearers closed in, the musicians took their places. We followed on foot behind, relatives, friends, well-wishers and hangers-on. Several children had added themselves to the company; they came after, jigging about in high glee, noisy and excited: a long, ragged tail-end to the procession.

Past the fields, through the winding streets of the village we went, the bobbing palanquin ahead of us. Until we came at last to where, at a decorous distance, the bullock cart waited to take them away.

Then it was all over, the bustle, the laughter, the noise. The wedding guests departed. The throng melted. After a while we walked back together to our hut. Our sons, tired out, were humped together asleep, the youngest clutching a sugary confection in one sticky fist. Bits of food lay everywhere. I swept the floor clean and strewed it with leaves. The walls showed cracks, and clods of mud had fallen where people had bumped against them, but these I left for patching in the morning. The used plantain leaves I stacked in one heap—they would do for the bullocks. The stars were pale in the greying night before I lay down beside my husband. Not to sleep but to think. For the first time since her birth, Ira no longer slept under our roof.

Reading two†

The Decision to Marry in Vietnam

This young Vietnamese girl's story about her family's decision to arrange her marriage dates back to 1940, when Vietnam was part of French Indochina. Though educated in the French manner as any young girl in France, at home the young Vietnamese girl lived according to traditional customs and Confucian teachings. This traditional home environment may help explain how a girl educated under a Western system could submit without protest to her parents' decision regarding her personal life.

Now on that May evening, while I was struggling with my essay, I heard my father coming upstairs. Good heavens, what could I have done to displease him? Whenever he came up to my room it was to scold or lecture me—reminding me of a young girl's duties to her parents and her family. This might go on for hours for my father, like every self-respecting, well-educated man, was never in a hurry. In these circumstances there could be no thought of my essay; as usual I should have to listen, sitting motionless with downcast eyes, looking as docile as possible. In Viet-Nam, filial piety is the first and fundamental principle engraved on our hearts. My father came in and sat down on the large couch of polished wood, without mattress or pillows on which we used to sleep, our heads resting on those oblong, wicker-work blocks which, though very pretty with their brightly coloured covers, were very hard and most uncomfortable. He looked at me over his spectacles and quietly said: 'Tomorrow you will take your books back to the librarian at the college and give this letter to the vice-principal before giving up your studies. Your mother and I, with the approval of your grandparents, have arranged a marriage for you with the sixteenth son of Madame H. They are Catholics and have asked that you should become one, and therefore you will do so. It is of no importance since, as a girl, you would not have to be responsible for the cult of the ancestors. Your brother will undertake this honourable duty. The day after tomorrow you will attend instruction at the Cathedral of Saigon.'

Thus speedily, clearly and without discussion, the two most important decisions of my life—my conversion and my mar-

† Le Kwang Kim, "A Woman of Viet-Nam in a Changing World," *Women in the New Asia*, ed. by Barbara Ward (UNESCO, 1963).

riage—were taken by my parents. Obviously, when my future mother-in-law asked me, at the joint family council, if I agreed to become a Catholic, my reply would be 'Yes' without hesitation, since my parents had already signified their agreement. After all, did I not admire the style and the distinction of those Catholic institutions for young girls maintained by the Augustinian Canonesses at Dalat?

Do not be surprised that a girl of 18, educated in Western culture for many years, should submit with such meekness to decisions of great moment affecting her personal life so closely. In Viet-Nam the family ruled everything, decided everything, but also took all responsibility for the consequences and supported all its members in any trouble.

These Vietnamese girls in Saigon are going to the university, dressed in their traditional costumes. Education has always been prized in both North and South Vietnam, and almost two-thirds of the people can read and write.

Reading three†

The Old and the New in Japanese Marriage

Marriage in modern-day Japan presents an interesting amalgamation of the traditional and the contemporary. Though young people seem to be as unrestricted as Westerners in their social relationships, when time comes for marriage, they often turn to the traditional custom of arranged matches. Some aspects of the old customs are changing, but the basic pattern of family-arranged marriages has largely remained the same. Traditional beliefs, such as the faith in astrology, often play a key role in making the final arrangements for the marriage, and time-honored ritual reigns at the wedding ceremony. Pearl Buck, the author of this reading, is an American Nobel prize winner for literature who has spent most of her life in Asia.

Japanese men apparently are not as concerned as American men about how their wives look. More important to the Japanese man is how his wife fulfills her wifely duties. The result is that instead of one divorce in every five marriages, as in America, divorce in Japan takes place only once in twenty-five marriages, even though divorce is easier in Japan than in the United States, incompatibility being legitimate grounds. The "love" marriages are not so successful as the arranged ones. One in every ten of these marriages ends in divorce.

Marriage itself, however, remains strangely traditional. I took some pains to discover just how traditional when I was in Japan not long ago, for I had been disconcerted upon discovering how much like American teen-agers the Japanese teen-agers are nowadays. Today young couples stroll hand in hand through city streets, a thing unheard of in the past. Young people, boys and girls, gather for long hours in coffee shops, and roar noisily about town on motorcycles or scooters. . . . A friend in the motion picture industry took me to a huge rock-and-roll theater in Tokyo, and there I saw and heard a vast expanse crowded with Japanese teen-agers, mostly girls and nearly all of them dressed in skirts and middy

† Pearl S. Buck, *People of Japan* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1966).

blouses. On the stage were the singers, all boys except one, and all long-haired types, wailing out love songs in Japanese and English, although I was told he understood not one word of that language. The girls moaned and swayed to his music and screamed at appropriate moments. When a favorite singer finished a song, his special fans rushed to the stage to garland him.

Seeing all this and being suitably astonished, I supposed that marriage customs had altered and that love marriages, Western style, were now the fashion. I found I was wrong. Marriage in Japan continues to be a family affair. When these screaming girls and long-haired boys reach the proper age, the parents begin a search for suitable mates for them. Most marriages in Japan, I discovered, are still *miai*, or arranged, the theory being that love comes after marriage rather than before. Once a young man has a secure job, it is time for his parents to make their choice for him or, and this is more common these days, to present him with a list of carefully screened prospects from which to make his own selection. A go-between is chosen, whose task is to advise the family on the suitability of various available young girls and eventually to arrange a meeting of the prospective bride and groom. The girl and boy, it is true, may express their preferences to the go-between, and may even achieve a parentally approved love marriage if the choice has been made from the recommended list.

When likely candidates are found and offered, the two sets of parents carefully go over the situation, exchanging pictures, collecting family histories, comparing educational qualifications, health, temperaments, social status, wealth. Astrology is also important, in order that the years may be compared. A girl born in the Year of the Hare, for example, may be unruly. Nor should the number four be found anywhere, since it is an unlucky number, just as nineteen is an unlucky age. If all signs are favorable the go-between sets the time and place for the young couple to meet. If this first meeting, or *miai*, is a success, then engagement presents are exchanged and the wedding is arranged. A fortunate day is chosen, and a lucky month. Cherry blossoms fall in April and maple leaves in October, and these are therefore considered unlucky months for a wedding. November and December, however, are considered most auspicious. Of course many families in modern Japan do not believe in all this, but custom tends to follow tradition, nevertheless.

After the miai and the exchange of gifts, the young couple may meet again several times, usually at public places and in the presence of others, to get acquainted. Granted, they cannot get to know each other very well under the circumstances, but nevertheless here is the modern touch, for in the old days no such meetings could have taken place.

On her wedding day this modern girl of Japan, who when she is a teen-ager indulges in rock-and-roll and out of her teens becomes a smartly dressed office worker, reverts to the past. She rents a wig to make her look like an old-fashioned girl with a high coiffure, on top of which she wears a wide white headband which is supposed to hide the horns of jealousy, the cardinal sin for a wife. This is a reminder, even on her wedding day, that she is not to expect her husband to be faithful to her, nor is she to be jealous

when the inevitable diversion of interest takes place. Her wig is held in place by tortoise-shell combs upon which are carved the characters for plum tree, fir and bamboo, each with its own significance of eternal loyalty, patience and beauty. Her costume is costly. It is the traditional kimono, sleeves almost to the floor, and the obi of such heavy silk brocade that it may use as much material as the kimono and cost hundreds of dollars. True, one may rent the costume, but purchase is considered socially more sound, though extravagant, for the costume may never be worn again.

After the ritual drinking of sake before the shrine of Shinto gods, a Shinto priest presiding, the white headband—almost a hat—is removed. It is usually made of white silk and somewhat hides the bride's face, especially as she keeps her head bowed. A naughty tradition has it that the purpose of this sort of headband was to keep the groom from seeing the bride's face, for once having caught a glimpse of ugliness, he might run away, never to return.

The wedding feast follows the marriage ceremony: there may be musical and theatrical entertainment and the usual joking and laughter which increase in bawdiness with the flow of sake. In the country regions and less modern cities, there is horseplay, and guests may force the couple into bed and peep through holes in the shoji to watch what follows. To avoid horseplay, young couples nowadays usually leave for a honeymoon elsewhere. This is the new Japan.

But—and here is the old again—whatever the wedding and wherever the honeymoon, there comes a moment when the two are alone. The man must now assert himself. He must speak to the woman in curt, lordly tones. She is not to think he is afraid of her or that he is weakened by love. Their separate roles must be made clear and distinct. She is the submissive one, he is in command. Never must she call him by his first name, nor omit the honorable title due to a husband from a wife. I have made a private research into this moment of clarification between husband and wife and apparently tradition has not changed. Except for those Japanese who are American born, each wife confessed to this important moment.

Is it possible, one may ask, that young people in Japan still accept the traditional marriage customs? Well, I have a young friend who was married several months ago, who saw his wife for the first time at the miai seven weeks before the wedding. The mother of his best friend was the go-between, and the miai at her house brought together not only the prospective bride and groom but their parents as well. Afterwards either young person could have called the whole thing off, but neither chose to. They had three dates—a movie, a concert, and a tour of the zoo. And then they were wed.

Unromantic? Perhaps. But I think the Japanese way has certain advantages over our own. In Japan one still gives great weight to the wisdom of one's elders when taking the most important step in life. As for my young friend, his marriage is working out well. He is already deeply attached to his new wife, a girl he had not so much as touched before their wedding day.

Reading four†

Arranging a Marriage in Japan

Japan was first among the Asian nations to begin to alter the traditional Asian pattern of parents deciding on a marriage match without consulting the prospective husband and wife. "Seeing sessions" were instituted, at which the partners were introduced to one another before the final verdict on the match was reached. These sessions represent the beginnings of a new attitude towards arranged marriages—that the judgment of the prospective couple deserves consideration. In the following reading, a simulated account written by an anthropologist, Aki and Jiro of modern-day Japan apply this policy and freely use their right to make the final decision on the choice of a marriage partner.

Aki emerged from college a young lady both modest and modern, refined in speech, dress, walk, and gesture. She had no romances and only rarely had dates. Her mother had often remarked to her husband and women kinfolk what an easy child Aki was—gentle, obedient, and polite. In later life, as Aki finished college, her mother sometimes felt moments of regret that her youngest daughter showed so little individuality. Her sisters and her brother had been more troublesome, but they had also been more interesting.

When Aki finished college at twenty-two, she talked a little of taking employment somewhere, but soon gave up the idea in deference to the mild opposition of her parents. She would soon marry, they thought, and there were few opportunities for suitable employment for a girl who had finished college with a degree in sociology. Aki had seen her brother and her three sisters marry and marry well. The girls were all pretty and their marriages, compromises between tradition and personal preferences, had not been difficult to arrange. Through the multiple skeins of kinship and personal connections, prospective bridegrooms for Aki were proposed and their qualifications discussed by her parents. Two introductions were arranged during the first year after her graduation from college, and Aki surprised her parents by politely but flatly

† Edward Norbeck, *Changing Japan* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1965).

expressing disinterest in both young men. Even more surprising was the lack of interest in Aki on the part of various prospective bridegrooms of proper station. A few, they were given to believe, did not want to marry a college graduate; such girls were too independent and bossy. Most others had no objection to a college education but demurred on other unstated grounds.

It became increasingly clear that arranging a suitable marriage for Aki was not an easy matter. Additional young men were reviewed but yielded only a few acceptable candidates that expressed interest. By the time Aki reached the age of twenty-six she had quickly put an end to four tentative overtures and was left with no prospects in sight. Aki herself expressed a desire to marry but seemed both unhurried and unworried. Her life revolved about the members of her family and diminishing relations with girlhood friends.

Much of Aki's time was spent with her sister-in-law and her two children. Brother Hisashi, thirty-eight, and his wife and children shared her parents' home and would expectably become its owners eventually.

To Aki's parents the issue of her marriage became urgent. She must marry soon or expect a lifetime of spinsterhood. Appraising her assets candidly, they were forced to acknowledge that Aki was not pretty. The prospective husbands she had refused to consider had had little to recommend them along these lines, to be sure, but masculine beauty had seemed to them a trivial matter. The sweetness of Aki's personality had disguised for them her lack of beauty, but her plainness was probably very apparent to those who did not know her well. Perhaps there were other considerations. The family had an esteemed social position but no great wealth or authority that might serve to override other shortcomings. And the girl herself was no help. Otherwise tractable, she could clearly speak her mind on the subject of a husband for herself. There had been unmistakable finality in her refusals.

The procedure now was to try at a lower level, to search for a young man of promise who might be deficient in social beginnings. There was nothing new in this action; it was honored by centuries of usage. Everyone knew that some of the most prominent men in the nation including the most highly paid business executive of the present day had sprung from very lowly backgrounds. When the possibility of marriage to Jiro was brought up, Aki was twenty-seven. She expressed willingness to meet him and did not hesitate afterwards to say that she liked what she had seen.

Regarding themselves as progressive young moderns, Aki and Jiro were reluctant to proceed with a marriage that was arranged in a wholly traditional way. They wanted to be sure themselves of their willingness to marry, and this attitude was understandable to everyone concerned. Jiro and Aki began a series of engagements, conducted with the utmost propriety. There were movies at the finest theaters, visits to art exhibits, and, with tickets provided by Aki's parents, sometimes concerts and other musical performances. Jiro talked of skiing and was delighted to know that Aki also could ski. In the chaperoning company of other young men and women, they made a trip

to a ski resort in the Japanese Alps. Jiro was no less pleased with Aki's ability to speak English, a language which he admired but was quick to admit that he could not speak despite years of studying it in school. Like many of his associates he could read the written language fairly well but had never mastered the difficult sounds of verbal English. In a few months questions and doubts vanished, and definite plans for the marriage were made. Jiro and Aki found themselves visiting the more decorous of the pullman-seat coffee lounges, indistinguishable from the other couples who held hands and seemed so delighted with each other's company.

Jiro's relatives were not disregarded. Arrangements were made to meet Aunt Shizu, and all were pleased to see that she acquitted herself well. Unasked, she soon expressed to Jiro her approval of Aki and her family. Formal communications were sent by mail from Aki's parents to Jiro's parents, who, after years of little use of their hands in forming characters distrusted their own ability and had their replies drafted in the schoolgirlish hand of an eighteen-year-old niece. The wedding ceremony was to be small but elegant. A lucky day was chosen, and the wedding hall of the Osaka Grand Hotel was engaged for the ceremony. With the help of Shizu, Jiro's parents were creditably dressed in rented clothing, his mother in formal black *kimono* and his father, considerably more ill at ease, in cutaway and striped trousers. Aki wore traditional bridal clothing of finest quality, complete with towering wig and the headpiece of silk that hides a bride's horns. Jiro was a fitting complement in rented morning coat and trousers. The banquet that followed was also traditional, but not the kind of wedding feast to which Jiro's parents were accustomed. The atmosphere was formal and drinking was confined to the exchange of cups required by etiquette. The bridal hall and banquet room had been reserved for use by another wedding party, due to appear as soon as the rooms had been hastily cleaned.

Jiro and Aki left for a week's honeymoon in Tokyo and scenic Nikko, which Jiro had never seen. The luxuries of the Okura Hotel, the wonders of the bursting city of Tokyo, and the poised assurance of his new bride in all of the social circumstances of the wedding and honeymoon trip deeply impressed Jiro. There were many other honeymooning couples, easy enough to identify, with whom they had exchanged sympathetic glances, but they had been happy to keep to themselves. Both were glad when the honeymoon was over, but neither felt dissatisfaction with the other. The pattern of their relationship was set. Aki would guide when guidance was needed and otherwise would follow. For his part, Jiro returned to Osaka with both affection and admiration for his wife.

The *Code of Manu*, sometimes called *Laws of Manu*, was written approximately two thousand years ago and became the primary foundation for law in Indian Hindu society. These laws, established to preserve the values of Hindu teachings and used until recently, include the following statement:

> A woman should never be independent. Her father has authority over her in childhood, her husband has authority over her in youth, and in old age her son has authority over her.

Some seventeen centuries after the *Code of Manu* was developed in India, the traditional Japanese attitude towards the married woman was illustrated in Kaibara Ekken's *Great Learning for Woman:*[1]

> A woman has no master but her husband whom she should serve with respect and humility, never with a light attitude and disrespect. In a word, the way of woman is obedience.

Today in various regions of Asia one could find a great many people who would agree with the above statements. However, it would be foolish to attempt to describe the cultural rules followed by the "typical" Asian husband and wife. In fact, it would be as difficult to describe the different cultural patterns of Asian married life as it would be to describe the forces affecting the "typical" Western husband and wife. By itself India represents a variety of roles and relationships. Region, cultural group, religion, caste, and economic level all add to the diversity.

Certain traditional customs, however, do exist within various Asian societies which directly affect the roles of the Asian husband and wife. Such attitudes and patterns of living often may be clearly observed and can be distinguished from those of North America. They constitute a springboard from which an inquiry into unique and important aspects of Asian life may be initiated. This group of readings should encourage you to confront two questions: (1) The anthropological question "How do the roles of husband and wife in Asian cultures generally differ from those in North America?" and (2) The philosophical question "Which traditional Asian customs governing the relationship between man and wife do you feel are reasonable, and which ones do you feel are not?"

1. Baroness Shidzue' Ishimoto, *Facing Two Ways* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1935).

Reading five†

Widowhood in Eighteenth-Century India

According to traditional Indian thought, the sacrament of marriage binds the wife irrevocably to her husband. The dutiful wife exists for her husband and follows his every step, even into death. Out of this principle grew the practice of *suttee,* a rite in which a widow burned or buried herself with her deceased husband. The woman who partakes in this rite is called the *Sati*, or the True One. In 1829 a regulation was passed which made suttee a homicidal act. However, illegal suttee rites continued into the beginning of the twentieth century, and even today reports of such rites appear occasionally. In the following reading Major John Corneille describes two cases of suttee. The author's observations were made in the middle of the eighteenth century, and reveal much about the historically traditional role of women in Indian society.

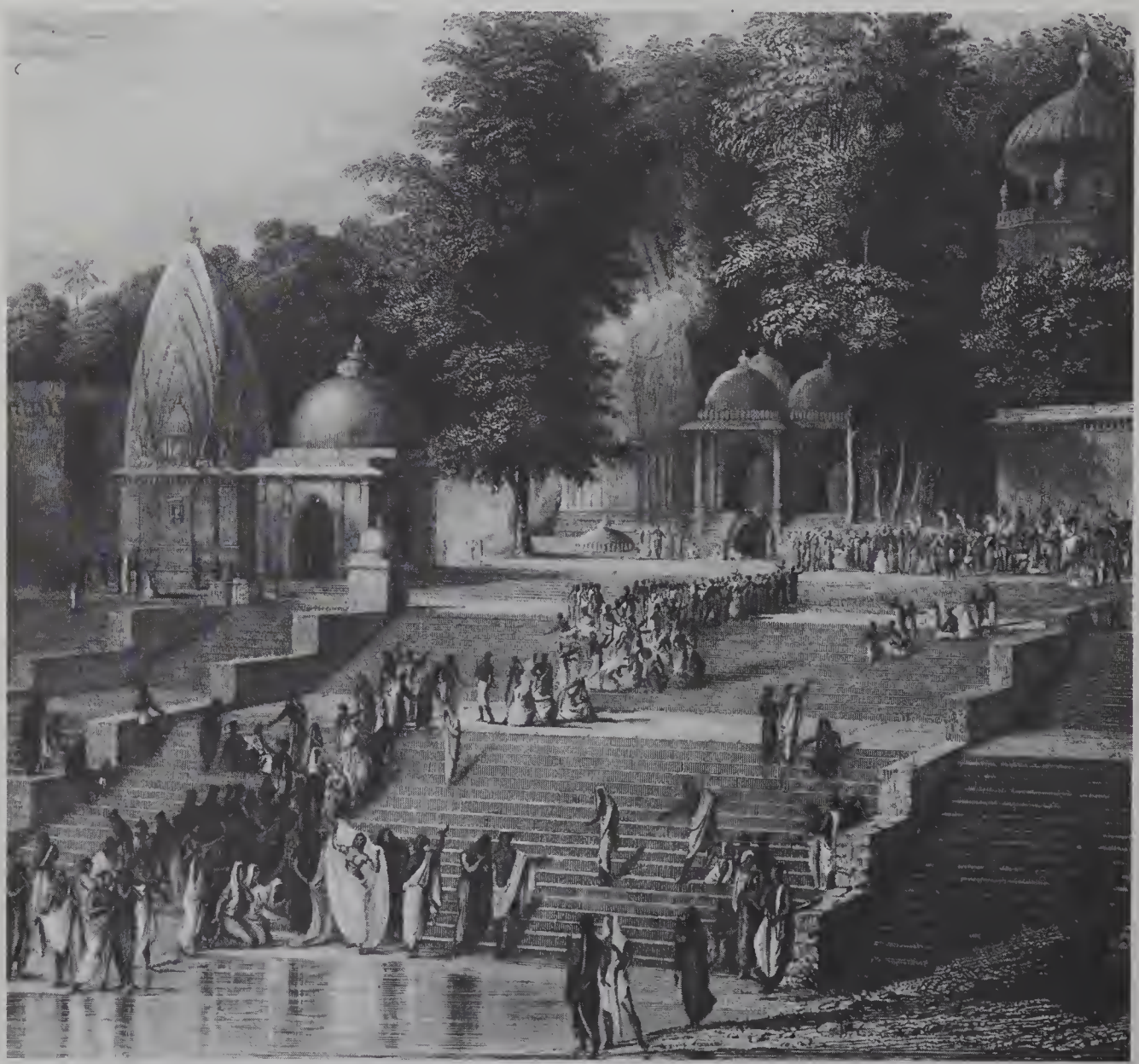
But of still a more extraordinary nature is that most inhuman custom of the women burying or burning themselves with their deceased husbands. It is such that had I not been witness of it I could scarce give credit to it. Being told there was a woman to be buried alive, I and several gentlemen all equally prompted by a spirit of curiosity, repaired to the appointed place, which was close to Calcutta. There we found a couple of women warming themselves over a small wood fire close to the river. The destined—or, more properly, voluntary—victim of this most unnatural custom seemed to be about forty years of age, clean in her dress and apparently very calm and composed in her mind, no way ruffled by any violent agitations yet unalterably determined to be buried with her husband. We used all the persuasion we could think of to dissuade her from her resolution, offered her a considerable sum of money even to defer it till the next day, but got no other answer than that life was not worth keeping now her husband was gone, and that she would follow him and she hoped be with him that night. As persuasion would not do and violence might be dangerous to make use of, we let her proceed. This she did in the following

† John Corneille, *Journal of My Service in India* (London: The Folio Society Ltd., 1966).

manner. The corpse of her husband being laid on the mud near the hole it was to be buried in, and close to the river, she sat herself by it for a few minutes, seemingly in a pensive mood, and then rose and lit four or five lamps which she placed near the body. After this she mixed some rice and plantain in an earthen plate. Now a Brahmin, or one of the heads of the deceased's caste, read something which she seemed to repeat with attention. She then washed the corpse, and a small bundle of straw being lit and given in her hand, she walked three times with it round the body with the greatest firmness and resolution although it was no easy task with the mud up to mid-leg. Again the priest repeated something, at which time, the lighted straw going out, she blew it up again. So composed were all her actions! Their prayers being ended, she put the fire to the beard of her husband. While she was performing this, some of the standers-by stuck the lamps in the mud round the grave and threw in the rice and plantain. Then the body was laid in the hole in a fitting posture, and she immediately followed it without the least alteration, no tremor of nerves nor agitation in her countenance. With a composure and steadiness scarce to be credited, she was helped down into the grave. A child of hers that was present, about twelve years old (in whom even at that age custom had so far got the better of nature that it was in no way moved at the loss of a mother—nay, even desired that she *should* be buried), was the first to throw a lump of mud on her, and the rest of the relations present then covered her as best they could. At first they set up a momentary cry, which was too short to prevent hearing any complaint the poor wretch might have made, but she never uttered any nor made the least groan.

As to the custom of burning, I have not seen it performed, but I had the following relation from a gentleman of undoubted veracity who, having the command of a considerable fort on the coast of Coromandel, was requested by some of the natives to allow the wife of a deceased Brahmin to burn herself with the corpse of her husband, it being customary on the coast in all districts belonging to the English to ask leave of the commanding officer. He, doubting the truth of what he heard concerning that custom, granted their petition. When all was ready, they came to acquaint him that the ceremony was then going to be performed. He attended them, and saw the designed sacrifice, who was a middle-aged woman of a comely person, with a steady composure in her countenance, conversing with a great deal of coolness with the relations and friends that encompassed her. She had not the least appearance of being intoxicated by any kind of draught, but even if she had been it would have had time to work off in the length of the march from her abode to the place of burning, which was about two miles. When they arrived at the pile, which consisted of a heap of sticks about two feet in height, the corpse was laid thereon and, after she had taken leave of all about her and given some flowers to the commanding officer with that same composure as she had maintained all along, she lay down close to the corpse, one arm under his head. They then strewed some brushwood on them both and set fire to the whole. As long as she could speak, she continued convers-

ing with those near her and never cried nor groaned the whole time, no noise being made elsewhere which would have prevented such exclamations being heard. The officer, who had intended preventing the last act, was deterred by the resolution and willingness with which she followed her husband and by the fear of irritating the vast concourse of people assembled on the occasion. Women are not obliged to follow either of these customs, but if once they say they will leave their houses with that intent and afterwards retract, they are then held in greatest contempt, which is attended with the loss of their caste and their abandonment by all their family. To do it is reckoned a most meritorious action and very pleasing to their deities, and those who perform it with resolution are held in the greatest esteem.



This nineteenth-century engraving depicts the preparations for a suttee, *or immolation of a Hindu widow on her husband's pyre. In 1829 the British, then in power, put a stop to this practice.*

Reading six†

The Lament of a Woman from Java

This reading illustrates a conflict between traditions and an individual's personal feelings. Raden Kartini was a European-educated twenty-year-old in 1900 when she wrote a series of letters to a Dutch friend from her home in Java. She describes the status that traditional Moslem law accords the wife. She refuses to accept tradition for the sake of tradition and relates with great candor her dislike for laws that allow a girl to be married without her knowledge or presence, that permit the husband to bring into this home four wives, and that give the wife no right to be released from the most unhappy union.

There is no help for it. Some day or other it will come to pass, must come to pass, that I shall have to follow an unknown bridegroom. Love is a will o' the wisp in our Javanese world! How can a man and woman love each other when they see each other for the first time in their lives after they are already fast bound in the chains of wedlock?

I shall never, never fall in love. To love, there must first be respect, according to my thinking; and I can have no respect for the Javanese young man. How can I respect one who is married and a father, and who, when he has had enough of the mother of his children, brings another woman into his house, and is, according to the Moslem law, legally married to her? And who does not do this? And why not? It is no sin, and still less a scandal. The Moslem law allows a man to have four wives at the same time. And though it be a thousand times over no sin according to the Moslem law and doctrine, I shall forever call it a sin. I call all things sin which bring misery to a fellow creature. Sin is to cause pain to another, whether man or beast. And can you imagine what hell-pain a woman must suffer when her husband comes home with another—a rival—whom she must recognize as his legal wife? He can torture her to death, mistreat her as he will; if he does not choose to give her back her freedom, then she can whistle to the moon for her rights. Everything for the man, and nothing for the woman, is our law and custom.

Do you understand now the deep aver-

† Raden A. Kartini, *Letters of a Javanese Princess,* ed. by Hildred Geertz (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1964).

sion I have for marriage? I would do the humblest work, thankfully and joyfully, if by it I could be independent.

In the Islamic world the approval, yes, even the presence of the woman is not necessary at a marriage. Father can come home any day at all and say to me, "You are married to so and so." I must then follow my husband. It is true I can refuse, but that gives the man the right to chain me to him for my whole life, without ever having come near. I am his wife although I will not follow him, and if he will not allow me to be divorced, then I am bound to him all my life, while he is free to do as he pleases. He may marry as many women as he chooses without being concerned in the least about me. If Father should marry me off in this manner then I should find a way out at the beginning, one way or another. But then Father would never do that.

God has created woman as the companion of man and the calling of woman is marriage. Good! it is not to be denied, and I gladly acknowledge that the highest happiness for a woman is, and shall be centuries after us, a harmonious union with the man of her choice.

But how can one speak of a harmonious union as our marriage laws are now? I have tried to picture them to you. Must I not for myself, hate the idea of marriage, scorn it, when by it the woman is so cruelly wronged? No, fortunately every Moslem has not four wives or more, but every married woman in our world knows that she is not the only one, and that any day the man's fancy can bring a companion home, who will have just as much right to him as she. According to the Islamic law she is also his wife.

Parents may not compel their daughters to marry a man who is beneath them in station. That is our only weapon against their arbitrary will.

The prospective bridegroom has only to go with the father or other male relative to the *pangulu*[1] or someone else of the kind and the wedding is over. The girl may know nothing whatever about it at the time.

Mother knew a woman who refused to marry. She said she had rather die than marry the man her parents had chosen for her. Heaven was merciful, three months before the date set for the wedding the cholera took her away. Had she lived, no one would have been disturbed in the least by her refusal. She would have been married out of hand despite her protests.

There was a woman of the people who became wife number two of a native official. The first wife, who was not quite right in her head, after a little went away from him, leaving behind a whole troop of children. Number two became the official wife and was a painstaking, loving mother to her step-children; she was very diligent and worked hard to save something from the income of her husband, so that later they would be able to educate his children. And it was thanks to her that the sons turned out so well. Once when her husband had gone to the city he came back home late at night, and called his wife outside. A guest had come with him for whom she must care, and make ready a room. The guest was a young woman, and when her husband told her that the guest was his wife and that she, his older wife, must thenceforth share everything with her, at first she was stunned, for she did

1. A mosque official who keeps a record of marriages and divorces.

not understand. She only stood and looked at him. But when the frightful truth penetrated to her brain, she sank without a single word to the ground. When she came to herself again, she rose to her feet, and asked, standing, for a written notice of divorce from her husband. At first he did not wish to understand her, but she persisted till at last he yielded and gave her the requested paper.

That very night she went out of the house on foot through fields and forests, to her parents' house in the city. How she got there she did not know. When she could think again, she was with her family and they told her that she had been ill for a long time.

Later, after she had recovered, she looked at the letter which she had forced from her husband on that terrible night, and saw that she was really not divorced at all. The letter merely contained her description and the information that she had run away from him.

The Moslem invaders and rulers left a deep imprint in Asia. Seven out of eight Indonesians practice the Moslem faith. These two veiled women are from Pakistan, where almost ninety percent of the population is Moslem.

Reading seven†

The Obedient Wife in Village India

The first rule for the Indian wife is obedience to her husband. According to traditional social law often followed in village India, the wife must look upon her husband as her god, be he a drunkard or a lunatic. The wife must eat only after the husband has finished, and must fast when he decides to fast. Traditional custom also forbids the wife to address her husband by name, for such behavior is considered highly disrespectful. She must address him with "my lord," or, in speaking of him to others, she must call him "the master of the house." When spoken to by her husband, the wife must keep her eyes lowered to show her humility.

The observations of William and Charlotte Wiser, missionaries to India, reveal the relationship between husband and wife in village India. In the 1960's, thirty years after the Wisers had written this description, they returned to the same village and found that very little change had taken place.

. . . No matter how humble a man's position may be in village society he becomes a personage when he enters his own courtyard. His wife, and any other women who are junior to him, are ready to do his bidding with heads bowed and voices subdued. To the young husband, this authority is most pleasing. He who has always been dependent upon others, suddenly finds a human being under his control. In exercising his newly acquired power he sometimes struts about like a young peacock. The women of the household laugh at him—behind their scarves. But outwardly they approve, and demand submission from his wife. One evening the Memsahiba was sitting with a group of untouchable women, busy making rag dolls. Voices were keyed high. We all raise our voices in the village, and are only aware of it when we suddenly hear ourselves shrilling in some dignified town bungalow or hospital. On this occasion as the women were working and talking, there was a

† William and Charlotte Wiser, *Behind Mud Walls, 1930-1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).

sudden hush. Over their heads came a prolonged scolding in a harsh, youthful voice. In the lantern light the Memsahiba saw Govind, who a year or two ago was a star at turning somersaults and at escaping from irate owners of pillaged sugarcane fields. She was about to ask why the storm of abuse, and to tell him to move on, when she observed a self-conscious smile under the sheltering scarf of the girl at her side, Govind's bride. The older women nudged one another and giggled. The girl rose, head bowed as though she expected a whipping and hurried away, with Govind on her trail. After performing the trifling task to which he had so forcibly called her, she returned, all smiles. Her husband had played his role of master, and she the role of obedient wife, to their own satisfaction.

There is a temptation for these parts to be played indefinitely in the larger joint families where there is always an audience of aunts and sisters-in-law. Husband and wife have little opportunity for a natural relationship, except in their courtyard or roof under cover of darkness. Even this savors of the clandestine, as the husband is expected to sleep among the men at the front of the house. We have known successful joint families in the city who have ensured privacy by providing a separate apartment for each of the smaller groups. But in the village this provision for privacy must be sacrificed to the practical needs of a farm household.

In these larger families it is almost impossible to distinguish real from fictitious fear of husbands, until one knows the individuals and hears the reactions of the women when there are no men about. Whether fear exists or not every woman looks up to her husband as her master. Be he kind or be he cruel, it is her duty to obey him. If he punishes her she accepts it like a naughty child. When the Memsahiba sympathized with a young *dhanukin*[1] who displayed her wrists cut where her husband had broken her glass bangles while beating her, the *dhanukin* showed no resentment toward her husband. The other women teased her, because she had been caught in mischief—talking to her husband's elder brother. While they laughed and teased, the husband appeared and his wife leaned far over her bread board, playing effectively the part of a crushed spirit, while the other women scurried off to suddenly remembered tasks. . . .

1. Indian word meaning "bride."

These women fill earthenware and brass jugs with water from the village standpipe at Faridabad, India.

Reading eight

Loyalty of the Japanese Wife

As in India, so also in Japan, the ideal wife is a paragon of obedience and loyalty to her husband. The supreme manifestation of a wife's devotion is her fidelity to her husband. In times past, social law dictated that if a wife violated this creed by committing adultery, she was expected to take her own life. Even in present-day Japan, marital infidelity applies only to the wife. For the husband, a definite and accepted separation exists between marital responsibilities and romantic love.

Ichiro Kawasaki, a former member of the Japanese Department of State, cites two examples, widely separated in time, of the Japanese wife's loyalty to her husband. In the second part of the reading, Pearl Buck considers the loyalty of the Japanese wife in spite of conditions rarely tolerated in North America.

Viscountess Saito†

Loyalty of the Japanese wife to her husband is a virtue excelled in by few other peoples, I believe. To counteract the stress which modern conditions have imposed on this institution of loyalty, we Japanese have a story which we like to repeat to our families. This story of the wife of Kazutoyo Yamanouchi, a feudal warrior, is proverbial:

Yamanouchi was a low-ranking warrior in the service of Lord Nobunaga Oda, a celebrated feudal chieftain in the sixteenth century. One day a horse dealer came from a northern province with a splendid mount. Yamanouchi, being ambitious, was very tempted to buy the horse, as the possession of a good steed was a sure step to promotion among the warrior class of those days. However, he could not afford it. He appeared so despondent that his wife insisted on knowing the nature of his worry. Though in feudal days a warrior considered it shameful and beneath his dignity to consult his wife on any matter pertaining to his duties, Yamanouchi confided in his wife. Upon hearing the story, she produced ten pieces of gold, which she had long kept stored in secret in the drawer

† Ichiro Kawasaki, *The Japanese Are Like That* (Rutland, Vt. and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., 1960).

of her mirror stand. Yamanouchi was surprised to find his wife with so much money, but she explained that it was her dowry and that her mother had enjoined her not to spend it except in the case of urgent need by her husband. Even though the couple were poverty-stricken for a long time, she had never thought of using this money, for her mother's words always rang in her ears and restrained her. Now she was glad she had not waited in vain! Yamanouchi bought the fine horse with the money, and his lord was very pleased with him. From then on Yamanouchi distinguished himself in the domain and was finally made a local baron.

We have always liked this story as an illustration of our ancestral virtues. In modern times, too, we have striking and dramatic accounts of the loyalty of Japanese wives.

In February, 1936 a number of disgruntled young officers of the Japanese Army, with some of their loyal enlisted men, staged a large-scale insurrection in Tokyo. They seized the principal government offices and assassinated a host of prominent statesmen known to be opposed to the radical expansionist policy of the military. The twenty-sixth of February, 1936 has gone down in the Japanese history as a dreadful day.

A group of these rebels took machine guns and other weapons from their garrison and broke into the home of Viscount Saito, former Prime Minister, to kill him. For a few terrible moments, Viscountess Saito placed herself in front of her husband and said to the brigands: "Kill me instead—my husband cannot be spared by the country." She actually put her hand on the mouth of the roaring machine gun until her wounds forced her aside. Several other bloodthirsty rebels forced their way into the house of General Watanabe, Inspector General of Military Education. In the frightful tragedy there, Mrs. Watanabe lay down with her husband in her arms, so that the assassins had to force the gun underneath her body to complete their dastardly act.

Haruko†

My friend Haruko, modern woman though she is, and possessed of her own "human feelings," still sees to it that her husband, a prosperous businessman in Osaka, looks neat when he goes for the evening to a geisha house with his associates. He is a handsome man and it is a matter of pride with her that he looks his best for other women, as a credit to his wife.

If he looks at her with a certain smile before he leaves, she understands.

"If I am late, don't wait," he tells her.

"Enjoy yourself," she replies.

Of course she does wait. But the days of her tears are over. When he comes in looking—what shall I say, refreshed?—she is amiable and pours him his bowl of tea without a word of reproach. Life for her is divided into two separate areas, her own and the other woman's, and within her own area she is secure, if not always content.

Whether the Japanese woman is content with her lot depends entirely on how Western she has become. My friend Setsu, who is a Nisei, born in the United States and returned to Japan, is not at all content with

† Pearl S. Buck, *People of Japan* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1966).

her Japanese husband, a physician, handsome and successful. They have quarrelled over his coming home in the small hours of the morning, and he won by not coming home at all. She now waits up for him exactly as Haruko does for her husband.

"Do you mind?" I inquired of Setsu.

"Of course I mind, but what can I do?" she replied with American indignation.

Thus the Japanese split-level existence: the man, on the one hand an honored father and respected businessman, on the other a male whose "human feelings" are to be indulged; the woman, on the one hand a wife and mother with a voice in P.T.A. meetings, neighborhood affairs and the business world, and on the other a female whose duty it is to accept the feminine, submissive role and devote herself to pleasing the male.

Because of the great variety of cultural patterns existing in Asia, generalizations about Asian life should be made with caution. However, it can, of course, be safely concluded that the family is a very important institution in Asia. The Indian family, which is a fundamental element in any caste group, generally requires the subordination of each member of the family to the preservation of the family unit. Marriage, the birth of children, and even the relationship between a wife and her mother-in-law are considered as being directly related to the preservation of the family.

Historically, China has been viewed as being made up of a great number of families rather than of individuals. The state itself has been considered an extension of the family, and there is evidence to indicate that the Communist regime has not altered this attitude significantly. Confucian teachings declare that five specific relationships have to be conducted in an orderly fashion before the society can function properly. Three of these relationships directly involve the family: (1) husband and wife; (2) father and son; and (3) older brother and younger brother.

In Japan, the concept of family threads itself throughout the fabric of the society. Farm groups, performing artists, trade people, industrial organizations, and even the state itself are family-like in structure with a father figure in charge. The Japanese generally view their country as being an extension of the family, with all of the fathers directing the destiny of their own families and being in turn directed by another father figure, the emperor. The individual in the Japanese family rarely can be separated from the family web. Those who hurt his family, hurt him. Those who hurt him, hurt his family. If one member of the family is disgraced, the family itself is disgraced. The various psychological, economic, and social ties to the family offer escape from loneliness and provide security for the individual. However, the individual's responsibilities and duties tend to further the view that he exists primarily to protect the family and that absolute independence is not feasible.

Naturally the role of the woman is greatly affected by the traditional views of what a family should be. The five readings in this section should assist you in answering the two-part question: What is the Asian woman's status in her family, and what role must she play?

Reading nine†

The Birth of Sons and Daughters

Mencius, the Chinese philosopher of the third century B.C., said that the most serious of unfilial acts is to leave no descendants. Thus, the greatest obligation that a married couple has is to beget an heir, a male child who can continue the family name. Preference for sons is known the world over, but it is especially reflected in the Asian family. Particularly those who tend to base their economic life on the family unit, with sons inheriting the businesses of their fathers, express a strong preference for male heirs. The following reading by Ann E. Wee, a member of the Social Science Department of the University of Malaya, reflects attitudes toward male and female offspring among the Chinese of Singapore.

The birth of a girl was looked upon as either an unfortunate fact to be accepted with good grace or an outright tragedy. For the daughter-in-law in her first years of marriage to produce a succession of girl babies and never a boy, was in a real sense a tragedy. For the young wife's status in her husband's family was indeed marginal until she became the mother of a son: only sons ensured worship of the ancestors, only as the mother of a son did a woman become a potential ancestress, with prestige in her husband's family in life and the assurance of comforting rites for her soul after death.

Sons shall be born to him,
They will be put to sleep on couches;
They will be clothed in robes;
They will have sceptres to play with;
Their cry will be loud.
They will be resplendent hereafter with
red knee-covers,
The future kings, the princes of the land.

Daughters shall be born to him,
They will be put to sleep on the ground;
They will be clothed with wrappers;
They will have tiles to play with;
It will be theirs neither to do wrong
nor to do good.
Only about the spirits and the food will
they have to think,
And to cause no sorrow to their parents.

Book of Odes

There is a chilling note in those last lines,

† Ann E. Wee, "Chinese Women of Singapore: Their Present Status in the Family and in Marriage," *Women in the New Asia,* ed. by Barbara Ward (UNESCO, 1963).

and neglect and rejection must have been the destiny of many a little daughter. Much of the literature, however, suggests that this was by no means universal: laments at her birth would not necessarily be reflected in the treatment a girl received.

These were the traditional patterns, and while some of the sharpness of distinction has become blurred among the modern Chinese of South-East Asia, yet much of the old feeling remains.

When we begin to understand the role that for hundreds of years the family played in China, and the family organization which made that role possible, then we begin to see how it is that sons stood for all that was desirable and auspicious, while daughters were at best a mixed blessing.

In a very real sense the dead did not cease to be members of their families, but only moved on to a more exalted phase of family life where they became the objects of worship and ritual attention from the living. But only male descendants together with their wives could perform these services for the parents: a daughter married out into another family in her teens and joined the ritual unit of her husband's family, ministering to his ancestors, not her own. The very salvation of a man's soul, and of that of his parents and ancestors, depended on his leaving male descendants to continue the ancestral cult. There are three unfilial acts, but the gravest is failure to beget sons, according to the sage. No wonder that even a weakly and unattractive son was to be preferred to the most promising daughter.

The basic fact of Chinese life is the struggle for existence. There is every evidence that the great majority of peasant families only managed to feed and care for their members by dint of the greatest prudence and by a willingness to face any amount of hard work to produce even small additions to income or food supplies. Very commonly any sudden disaster, flood, drought or civil strife, could deprive the peasant of his tiny land holding and force the members of the family to wander off in search of work, to join the vast horde of 'floating people' who eked out a miserable existence as wandering labourers, in an overcrowded land with few opportunities.

Such 'floating people' were a major element in imperial society, and their plight well known to the great mass of peasantry who only barely managed to cling on to their tenure of land and to keep their families together. And each was constantly aware that some minor crisis or bit of ill-luck could mean the end of his status as a family man, a householder with roots in the village circle, able to tend in the approved way the souls of the ancestors, and with hopes of bearing male descendants to carry on the family line.

This precariousness of status, in this world and the next, left little room for sentiment in the organization of Chinese family life. Sons by their hard work, skill and thrift could help maintain and might well raise the standing of the family: by filial behaviour they could care for their parents in life and after death. The son was the investment on which the family's future depended. But what of the daughter? As soon as she reached her teens and the age when her labour could be most useful to them it was time for the family to arrange a marriage for her, with all its attendant expenses; and once married into another family her opportunities for visiting her own family were few, and the

material help she could render limited to small formal gifts brought on the occasion of visits. And, worse still, the self-respect or 'face' of the woman and her family required that gifts of at least equal value be sent back with her to her husband's family. All in all, the Chinese saw girls as 'goods on which you lose'.

A girl would leave home in a few years in any case; it is not surprising that in times of crisis when poverty threatened the break-up of the family she could be spared a little earlier, an encumbrance of which the family could free itself. Disposal of immature daughters has always been a feature of the family life of the very poor in [traditional] China, and it took a variety of forms. Female infanticide was much referred to in the old mission literature, and was undoubtedly one anguished response to the extremity of poverty in many areas, though by no means in all. The Chinese themselves have always condemned the practice, and the unbalanced sex ratio and consequent shortage of brides resulting from it in some neighbourhoods was a social evil they recognized. The attitude of society to other methods of disposal was more neutral, and perhaps one can infer that these methods were, therefore, more likely to be resorted to.

Firstly there was outright sale, in which the family relinquished all rights over the girl in return for a cash payment. This might be pathetically little if economic depression was widespread, but in any case would tend to vary upwards in ratio to the girl's age. Sale might be direct to another family, but it was more likely to be to a broker when the girl's ultimate destiny would be unknown to her parents. Her purchasers might use her as a domestic slave, then in her late teens she might be given in marriage, or alternatively kept as a low status concubine of some member of the family. Whatever the fate of the daughter sold out of the family, she was in effect entirely rightless and no ethical code effectively controlled the treatment meted out to her or served as adequate protection of her interest.

Several writers have suggested that outright sale was particularly rife in times of widespread flood or famine, and was perhaps especially a feature of the life of those on the brink of joining or actually within the ranks of the 'floating people'.

Another device for disposing of daughters was common among the desperately poor, especially in certain dialect groups. This was the complete handing over of her in child betrothal to another family, to spend her childhood under their roof, and be married in her middle teens, by a quiet ceremony to one of their sons. Here the disposing family lightened themselves of the burden of a daughter and received a sum of money. The receiving family, almost certainly themselves not rich, ensured a bride for their son without having to meet the much greater expense of arranging a marriage for him later with an adult bride. They also, as she grew, benefited from the 'little daughter-in-law's' increasing ability to take a share of the work in the family. It seems that the parents of a 'little daughter-in-law' commonly failed to keep in touch with her.

Reading ten†

The Roles of the Chinese Female

Though destined by traditional social law to a life of obedience, the female of traditional China did enjoy, over her lifetime, some variation in her role as the subservient sex. Before marriage, the Chinese girl enjoyed relative equality with her brothers. At marriage, she set herself under the dominance of her husband and the discipline of her husband's family. The begetting of male heirs brought some increase in her status as a rightful member of the family. As mother-in-law to her sons' wives and later as the reigning grandmother of a household, the woman finally could claim some authority. Dr. Yang, who was at one time associated with the Social Science Research Institute at the University of Hawaii, points out that the traditional young Chinese bride had a specific role that required submissive adjustment.

The status of the female in the traditional Chinese family changed in different stages of her life. Her status in childhood and girlhood was not particularly low compared to that of her brothers or male cousins in the same household. In spite of her low evaluation as a family asset, she enjoyed a fair share of parental affection and material family benefits. The first serious discrimination came in the matter of educational opportunity, which went first to the son even when the idea of education for women had started to be accepted in modern cities, for educational investment in a girl was considered irrecoverable owing to her eventual departure from the family. Her most trying period began with her marriage into another family. She was a stranger in a new family, under relentless intimate surveillance and discipline from the parents-in-law, unprotected by the supposedly intimate husband, and left to fate by custom and law. Before she gave birth to a son, she was considered only a half-qualified member of the family. With the birth of a son, she fulfilled her duty in perpetuating the ancestral lineage and found protection and security in the future of the son. Motherhood of a male descendant always lessened family discrim-

† C. K. Yang, *Chinese Communist Society: The Family and the Village* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1959).

ination against her and from then on, her lot improved as the children grew older. When she became a grandmother, she was usually the supreme woman in the household, ranking in status next to her husband should he still be living.

In each stage of her life she held an inferior position to the male members of the family of the same generational level in vital matters, and to those in the generation above hers in all matters. This inferiority of status, mitigated by parental and general family affection while she was still at home, explains the harsh situation of the bride trying to adjust to the intimate ways of the superiors who were strangers to her, including the husband whom she had married by parental arrangement and not by personal choice. With marriage began the most personally humiliating and emotionally disturbing stage of a woman's life, generally covering the age from sixteen or eighteen to the thirties, after which the mother-in-law would either have died or retired and the children would be grown. In this stage one saw the raw subjugation of an individual, for the most relentless measures were sometimes taken by the family against the young female who tended to reject subordination.

The young wife was subordinated not only to the males of the family but also to the mother-in-law and, to a lesser degree, to other females in the superior generation. It could be argued that the mother-in-law, in order to exercise discipline upon the daughter-in-law, must enlist the approval and cooperation of her own husband and her married son, and that her authority was delegated by the male. What really mattered was that only the young wife's submission made it possible for the traditional family to assimilate a new female member into its intimate life and thus prevented the breaking off by the young wife and her husband into an independent family.

Even though many laws now control the family unit, many elements of the traditional Chinese family remain.

Parents-in-Law in China and Japan

The subordination of children to parental wisdom even after they have married is an extension of filial piety. The married son still obeys his parents, and his wife is expected to obey the family into which she has married. In the traditional Asian family, almost no adult woman could escape a period of subordination to her mother-in-law, and few women could ever attain a position of real authority in the home. However, women who were fortunate enough to bear sons and later to become mothers-in-law to their sons' wives, could in their old age attain honor and status in the household. The following two selections by Dr. Hsu and Pearl Buck show how even in China and Japan the traditionally honored status of the parents-in-law is preserved.

China†

Recently I went to a movie in which a young couple had a quarrel. The wife, in a huff, ran out of the apartment carrying a packed suitcase. The husband's mother, who lived on the next floor, then appeared on the scene. The elderly woman consoled her son by saying, "You're not alone, son. I am here." The audience roared with laughter. The sequence of events and that particular remark left little doubt in the minds of the audience that the elder woman was at the back of the young couple's quarrel. The mother was committing the worst of follies because she did not have sense enough to stay away, especially after the trouble had flared into the open.

A Chinese audience would have found hardly anything amusing in these events. In the Chinese view, the younger woman, and not the older one, would have been the culprit. For whether or not a man has reached majority, his tie with his parents customarily has priority over that of the marital bond. Only a bad woman would leave her husband because of a conflict between the two responsibilities. Under the circumstances, the mother who consoled her son was doing nothing out of order.

† Francis L. K. Hsu, *Americans and Chinese: Two Ways of Life* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1953).

The Chinese wife is, in the first place, selected by her husband's parents to become an additional member of a home which is founded on solidarity between her husband and his parents. The typical American wife, on the other hand, would never consider occupying a subsidiary position. She has claim not only to the bulk of her husband's earnings but after business hours to his undivided attention as well. Parents-in-law are useful help in an emergency, but the connection between the older couple and the younger one is a matter of friendship rather than kinship.

In the second place, Chinese marital adjustment, instead of being exclusively a matter between a man and his wife, is very much the parents' business. In fact, some Chinese parents do not only participate in quarrels between their sons and daughters-in-law, but it is not at all unusual for them openly to force a showdown between the younger couple. Most Chinese wives entertain the impression, usually with good reason, that their parents-in-law favor their husbands in any marital dispute. In self-defense they often call in their own parents from another village. And not infrequently what begins as a minor ripple between the spouses soon develops into a battle royal between the two sets of parents-in-law, each reinforced by their other children. In this situation the husband and wife usually are divided by the battle line of the two sets of relatives.

No American parents would dare to interfere to such an extent. Even if they have strong feelings about their children's marital difficulties they are obliged to do their manipulating behind the scenes. In fact, most family counselors do not hesitate to advise parents to keep their noses out of their youngsters' affairs, difficulties or no difficulties.

These differences express something fundamental. To the Chinese, a man's relationship with his parents is permanent. It is so central and so important that all other individual relationships are overshadowed by or subordinated to it.

The Japanese mother-in-law often retains her traditional role in the family.

Japan†

In the hierarchy that is the Japanese family system, each person has position and therefore an honorific title. One does not speak to brother number three as one does to brother number two or one. This is difficult for a foreigner, but instinctive to a Japanese, who knows exactly the level of approach for each human being. It is a situation characteristic of old and stratified cultures and has its own advantages. A certain ease follows when one knows where one stands in relation to other persons. One is not dependent upon the vagaries of love and friendship since the family surrounds. Whether this can continue as Japan becomes industrialized and altogether modern cannot be foretold. It is an axiom, apparently a Western axiom, that freedom for the individual brings with it the penalty of loneliness.

It is true, too, that under the Japanese system severe demands are made of each member of a family. I think of my friend who is the wife and active business partner of a great motion picture magnate in Tokyo. I weekend at their house outside the city, and I know her both in her office and at home. She wears kimono at all times, a contrast to most Japanese businesswomen, and looks exotic in a quiet way, certainly thoroughly Oriental, although her office is as modern as any in a glass house in New York, and her half-dozen secretaries are as smart as their American counterparts. She conducts an international motion picture company and thinks nothing of taking a jet for a few days in Paris, Rome or London. Yet her family life is centered about her husband's old mother, the last of that generation, and her daughter is a talented young actress. In short, while her daily life is modern and extremely successful, her roots are solidly in Japanese traditional life.

Her house is typical of a dichotomy that has no division, its meeting point a smooth passing from one part to the other. Thus we enter through a gate in a wall, and the gate is barred. A bell brings the gateman to open it, and we are in a garden, a Japanese garden complete with rocks, a pool and stone lanterns well placed. The house is large, in the main Japanese, but with a modern garage for the family Rolls-Royce, the daughter's sports car and the workaday station wagon. The house when we enter it seems entirely Western except that we take off our shoes at the door and accept slippers from a maid in kimono who kneels to put them on our feet. We are ushered, with many bows from the little maid, into the living room. It is furnished entirely in the Western style, and very handsomely, as are the dining room beyond and the library across the hall.

But wait—all these rooms open into a central room which looks as though it came out of a museum of old Japan. The floor is covered by tatami mats instead of carpets. In the middle sits a little old lady on her floor cushion before a table barely above the floor. She is eating her supper, a Japanese meal served by an elderly Japanese maid in kimono, who kneels as she opens the canister of hot rice. She fills a bowl and sets it on the table where three or four dishes are waiting, a small whole fish baked on a flat stone, some green vegetables, and sliced octopus.

"My honored mother-in-law," my friend

† Pearl S. Buck, *People of Japan* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1966).

says. I bow, the old lady smiles and nods affably, but does not rise. My friend explains.

"Our mother prefers the Japanese style of living, but we like her with us and she enjoys everything. So she is here in the heart of our home."

It is quite true that discords can and do arise when a girl marries into a home and is obliged to defer to her mother-in-law, which of course she must do. I think of a friend in Japan, a talented writer now in her mid-life, who had an extremely difficult time with her husband's mother. My friend, at the time of her marriage, was one of the more emancipated people, a very modern woman educated in the United States and a graduate of one of our American colleges. She stayed unmarried for a rather unusually long time, and when she finally fell in love—yes, she fell in love, and decided to marry for love—it was with a widower who lived with his children and his mother. When my friend had made her choice she went to friends who arranged matters for her. I might mention here that this is another freedom that the Japanese woman has: If she has an inclination for a particular man, she does not need to wait for his overtures but is free to ask her parents or a go-between to approach the man on her behalf. It is all considered perfectly proper, and a very sensible way of finding out whether or not feelings are reciprocated. In this case my friend's feelings were reciprocated and the marriage was arranged. There was a fine relationship between the two of them, and she made a very good Japanese wife even though she had been educated abroad.

But her husband's home proved to be too traditional for her. The old mother-in-law dominated both her and the children, and treated my friend as though she had had no experience or education at all. This of course irked her. There was polite battle after polite battle, and the younger woman was always on the losing end. The old mother would insist, for instance, that the children be given certain kinds of food that their own mother knew they should not have, and would permit them to do certain things that the mother would have preferred them not to do. There was no arguing with the old lady, other than the barest of remonstrances, for after all she was honored mother-in-law and she was to be respected. Her wishes were law. To make things even more difficult, the man always took his mother's part. It was a son's duty, and he did his duty. His wife recognized that he was correct in doing so, but it made her feel very solitary. She was obliged to yield over and over and over again to the autocratic old woman, until her position became almost insupportable. As a matter of fact she wrote a book, published in this country, and part of it related the troubles she had had with the old woman and the deep resentment that had grown within her.

Of course, one of the great delights in life for a daughter-in-law is to become a mother-in-law in her turn. Then a woman truly comes into her own. What she is like as a mother-in-law depends very much on what her own mother-in-law was like. If her mother-in-law was sweet and gentle, then she herself is likely to be sweet and gentle when time and circumstance promote her to that favored position. But if her husband's mother has been domineering and dictatorial, then—let her own son's wife beware!

Reading twelve†

Roles in a Hindu Family

The following interviews with a Hindu family from village India suggest what social, economic, and religious forces might have shaped the traditional patterns in Hindu family life, and what forces might still preserve those age-old patterns in the midst of the Atomic Age. Isolated from the outside world, the village family continues through cycles of arranged marriage, childbearing, bitter struggle for survival, and extension of the family through married offspring. Each member of the family accepts his role and his lot with serene resignation. As the father of the family says, "Man cannot change his destiny; it is solely in the hands of God."

The father: Baburao Balwant Kurhade

I had a very happy childhood. I was born at Alandi in the beginning of the century. My father was a rich farmer, who owned twenty-five acres. I am an only son, for my two sisters died at an early age, two years apart. In those days there was no doctor in the village. There were three people in the house. Today, thanks to my continuous efforts, we are now eighteen.

At the age of ten I went on a pilgrimage to Pandharpur with my parents. At times we rode in a bullock-cart, at times we walked. I remember the temple and the river where we performed our ablutions. At the age of six I went to school, and I stayed there until I was seventeen. The school was strict and our master was severe. I learned to read Marathi and to count and then I learned the history of Maharashtra and geography. No, I don't know if China is bigger or smaller than Maharashtra. How could I know? I've never been there.

When I was thirteen my marriage was celebrated. I remember that on the first day of the wedding the women of the village covered my body with yellow *haldi* (turmeric) powder. At the head of a procession with drums, flutes and an orchestra, I then went to my wife's village. My father-in-law had not given her a dowry, but he did pay for the ceremony, and he gave me a white dhoti,[1] a jacket and a silk turban.

Until my father died I lived a peaceful

1. Loincloth worn by Indian men.

† Danielle Hunebelle, "A Hindu Family Tells Its Story," *Réalités* CXLI (April, 1963).

life. I played cards, I chatted with the neighbors, I drank brandy. I named my eldest son twelve days after he was born. I called him Vithoba (Vitthata), for he was born on a Wednesday, the day dedicated to this god. A few months later, the jeweller pierced his ears. Then, one after another, I had ten children—seven boys and three girls—for such was the will of God.

When my father died of old age, we burned his body and I threw his bones into the river. Why be afraid of death? God settles those problems. Man cannot change his destiny; it is solely in the hands of God. The poor? They committed evil deeds in another life; they must atone for them by suffering.

You ask if I think it is normal that eighty per cent of the people at Alandi should be very poor? Oh, yes, it is a very evil thing to think that eighty per cent are very poor. Isn't it unpleasant for a man to think that only twenty out of a hundred persons are good and have committed good deeds in their previous life? As the saints say, there will always be the happy and the unhappy.

When I endured adversity, I had faith that the future would be better. I had inherited four thousand rupees in cash, some silverware, a little gold, two houses and about twenty-five acres of land. For fifteen years, we lived on my inheritance. Every year, when I had to pay the land tax to the government, I borrowed money from the *sanakar* (moneylender). He lent me about five hundred rupees at six per cent interest. He was decent because I paid him his interest, but he had ruined many, many villagers.

At the end of a few years both my houses were completely mortgaged, my wife had to sell her jewels and we went through a period of unimaginable misery. There was no grain to feed the children. I didn't even have a dhoti to wear. I don't understand how the children were able to stay alive and grow up. I did not work, for God inspired me with the desire to do nothing. When the children complained that they were hungry, I told them: "Pray and trust in God."

The hard times ended all alone at the end of sixteen or seventeen years. I had planted eight hundred orange trees, thinking that they would grow without any help —I was the first man in the village to bring in plants. Four years after the first crop I earned six thousand rupees, and since then I've steadily increased my wealth.

My eldest son, whom I had married to a girl in a neighbouring village, was adopted a few years later by a childless man whose wife was the grandmother of my daughter-in-law. He left our house with his two children and moved there. It was for his own good.

When Vitthata left, Namdeo, the next oldest, was twelve years old; I took him out of school and put him to work on the farm with the servants. I think that agriculture is the proper thing for children for it needs the hands of the entire family.

As for my daughters, I found them good husbands in families where they are not beaten and where the men have gone to school. I gave each a thousand rupees, I paid for the ceremony and I gave to my sons-in-law a turban woven with gold, a dhoti, and shoes.

The only failure was with my youngest daughter, Anusaya. Ever since she developed, she has suffered from epilepsy. My wife has gone a thousand times to the temple to pray, but the fits come every

month. It is very hard to marry an afflicted daughter so I chose a city man, a cinema cameraman in Poona. I had to give twelve hundred rupees in dowry and mortgage some land for five years. The feast cost me a great deal—more than twenty-five hundred rupees. Naturally, I didn't tell my future son-in-law that she was epileptic. I thought that, perhaps, the will of God would end her fits after she was married—and what was the use of making her look bad in the eyes of her in-laws? Unfortunately, her mother-in-law was so unkind that Anusaya was afraid of being burned alive, and now she is back in our house with her child, abandoned by her husband.

Now that we have funds again, I enjoy my family life. I wake up at seven, I drink tea served by my wife, then I go to the fields and give work to the *thakars* (the servants) and to my sons. Next I bathe, I go to the temple and I return home, where my wife and my daughter-in-law serve lunch to me. Then I have my nap. In the evening, I play *sat hati* with my neighbours, sitting in the street in front of the temple.

In my house everyone is united and they all do their share of work. Even though Datta is only twenty-six, I have made him the head of the business. It is he who collects our annual income, pays the farm workers (one rupee a day in season), pays the grocer every six months after the harvests, settles the taxes and buys clothing for the whole family. But neither he nor any of my children has the right to spend any money, no matter how small a sum, without my consent.

When I was twenty my ambition was to have a happy family around me. I think that I have succeeded. The greatest joys of my life? First, there was my first orange crop and then, last year, the digging of the new well. To put more of my land under cultivation, my children decided, you see, to dig a well in some fallow land.

After going to a diviner and then to the astrologer, Datta started work on the day of Dasara, a blessed day. All my sons with their workers then made an offering to Ganapati, the god of success. They put some rice, a coconut and some red powder on a stone. They dug, but they did not find water. Then, on the second Monday in July, we made a *puja* (offering) to Satya Narayan. We invited three hundred people to eat with us, and a Brahmin scattered rice, petals and powder over a statuette of Vishnu while reciting the *mantra* in Sanskrit. A few days later the water began to gush forth.

What kind of régime is there in the Soviet Union? I do not know. Kennedy? Khruschev? No, I do not know those names. I read the Poona *Sakal* every day and I discuss the news with my neighbours. Yesterday it was the festival of the god Ganapati, and today there are municipal elections. They say in the newspapers that people have landed on the moon. Who? I do not know. What do I have to do with the world? If my party's candidates are elected in Poona, then I am happy. My party? It is the party of the village headman and the deputy headman. Since the majority of the people are with them, I am with them.

I have not made a will. When I die my sons will share the land, the animals, the money and the rooms of the house among them. Wives do not inherit. My wife will live with the son who likes her most—probably the oldest or the youngest. Do I feel satisfied with life? Every time that I

have had something to do, its achievement was directed by God. I think that I have a good family which has succeeded in obtaining appreciable results under my authority.

The mother: Salyabhamabai Balwant

I don't know my age. I don't know how to read or write. I was born at Kuruli, fifteen miles from here. My parents, who are still alive, had two hundred acres, about a hundred bullocks and eight or nine farmers working full time. We were rich, but my mother was very strict and she never stopped working. When I was four I began to take care of my two little brothers. It was the only occupation I had.

One day—I was almost nine years old—Mother called me into the room. Four men had come to look at me. I didn't see them because I kept looking at the floor. They asked my name and then they went away. Then my mother said to me: "You are so lucky, Satya, it's the first time that anyone has come to look at you and you have been accepted for marriage."

On my wedding day, when I saw my husband for the first time, I thought: "He is a good man, I have fallen into good hands." He was just thirteen. I didn't have the right to talk to him or play with him. I lived in the kitchen with my mother-in-law, who liked me and who did not give me too much work to do.

A little while afterwards, the plague came and my mother-in-law died in two days. She suffered terribly, she had big boils on her thighs and she was very stiff. I wasn't afraid of catching the sickness because I did not understand what was happening. My sister-in-law also died two days after my mother-in-law. We were then staying in Poona where the funeral banquet was held. It was the first time that I had seen a big city with streets and buildings. To tell the truth, I don't like cities and, two months later, I was very happy to go back to our village.

I did everything in the house, even when I was pregnant. At the beginning of my ninth month, my mother came to live with us. The delivery lasted three hours. I didn't feel anything. I stayed in bed twelve days on a wooden frame, then my husband saw the child. He did not say a single word, but we hung the cradle on a beam. About fifty women came to sing lullabies and, five times, we picked up the baby and put him back again on his cloth while saying the name of the child Krishna, and then we renamed him Vitthata. My father-in-law was very happy to have a grandson. When you have a daughter, you have to give her a dowry.

As soon as I had two or three children, we began to feel a lack of money. We let the *thakars* take care of our fields, and when you allow workers to do farming, you can't make any profit. My husband didn't know how to do a thing. Soon I didn't know how I was going to feed my children. Every two years another one was born. I thought it was the will of God. I had to accept the idea of selling my jewels. Even my big gold bracelets and my necklace with twenty-five coins. I still cry when I think about it because my father gave me those jewels before I was married and I loved them as I loved my family. In those days I had five little boys, a daughter of twelve, and Vitthata who was almost fifteen. Life was hard without a daughter-in-law in the house.

One day my husband said: "Let us find a wife for Vitthata. That way, you'll have a girl to help you in the kitchen." Well, at that time, a man came to the village to ask if there was a boy who wanted to marry.

It was in the morning at about eleven o'clock; I was cooking. I spread a blanket on the floor. I told the man to sit down and I made tea. "I have come to see your son," the man said as soon as my husband appeared. "Here he is," my husband said, returning with Vitthata.

Then my husband looked at the calendar, chose the right day, and a week later we went to visit the girl in her village. Since neither of the families was rich, it was decided that the girl's family would just pay for the ceremony and give Vitthata a gold ring and some clothes. The wedding was held two weeks later. It lasted three days.

Yes, that's probably the best memory of my life, when I finally had a daughter-in-law to help me at home. Four years later, I married off my daughter, Shanta, who was almost fourteen. It had been a hard winter and the children had caught smallpox. I went to the temple of the goddess Devi to pray that they would be cured. I offered her a sari embroidered in gold, a coconut and a cake. It was all that I could do.

It was only when my sons grew up and started to work in the fields that life became easier. Namdeo, Chandrakant and Datta really had a very sad childhood. I would have liked them to have an education, but they all had to leave school early.

I don't know how to read and I was really surprised when I was elected to the municipal council. I go to the meetings every two weeks with a neighbour, the wife of a restaurant owner. We sit a little to one side and we don't move while the men sit around a big table under the portraits of the raja Sivaji and of the saint Jnanesvar. They talk about where they are going to put street lights and water taps. We never say anything.

About twice a year I go with my husband to Poona. I have never been to the cinema. I buy saris for my daughters-in-law, I choose the colour and the quality myself. I don't like to be away because you have to watch the work and give orders.

I still get up at five in the morning. I sleep on the floor in the big room with my husband, my sons Pandit and Anna, my daughter Anusaya, her daughter, and Datta's son. The young couples sleep in the attic. Since Datta's wife has a baby, she sleeps alone in the kitchen. Two other sons stay out at the farm at night. As for Bapussaheb, he goes to a little gymnasium where he lifts weights, and he spends the night there with his friends.

Has my life been happy? For a few years we were hungry, but now things are better. Have I had a good husband? It was my parents who arranged the marriage and when a marriage has been made, you must be happy with your husband. Mine has all the authority in the house. He speaks very little, he has never given me a present, but everyone obeys him. The father is as good as God in the home.

The fourth son: Dattatraya

I remember especially the terrible time when we had smallpox; we lay on the floor in the big room for weeks, and Mother fed us fruit and put hot towels on our bodies. For a month we had fever. We screamed

all the time, we kept squirming and rolling so that it wouldn't hurt so much. It was awful.

I went to school when I was eight, very irregularly. I had to take the men their meals, cut hay for the animals, and take out the stones clogging the irrigation canals around the orange trees. I would have preferred to stay in school. My ambition was to be educated. Every week the master gave us a written test, and I didn't have the money to buy a sheet of paper.

My master, Guruji Deshpande, liked me a lot; he said I was the cleverest in the class. Because of my family situation, I wasn't able to attend school for the hundred and twenty days required to qualify for the examination. Guruji Deshpande called me in one morning: "Don't worry, Datta, you are a clever hardworking boy, and I will do my best to see that you get permission to take the examination." I thanked him with all my heart. He won his case. I was seventeen, and that examination was very important to me.

I needed ten rupees to go to Poona. I couldn't ask my father for it. Impulsively, I borrowed the money from a neighbour, but as soon as I was in the examination room and writing my answers, I panicked. My anxiety became so unbearable that I suddenly stopped writing, I left the room, returned to Alandi and began to work on the farm for good.

That year my father bought a Diesel engine to pump water and, gradually, times became better. I even know how to repair the engine all alone now after watching the demonstrator at Alandi. Besides, last year I think I accomplished the best thing I've ever done in my life. We didn't have any water and nearly all our land was fallow. I persuaded my brothers to dig a well. It was very hard work, the water wouldn't gush out. In three months we dug forty feet down.

At first the neighbours were all gossiping. They said: "They're not doing that for water, they want to bury their gold." And the girls I knew in school all felt sorry for me: "Look how he works with his hands . . . and he's the son of an old rich family." Today we have water, even when it doesn't rain. And the neighbours ask me: "How is it that you have water?"

I got married at nineteen because my father wanted me to marry. He thought that I was old enough. I didn't know the girl, she was from another village. My father-in-law saw me, thought that I was intelligent and hardworking and asked my father to look at his daughter.

I saw my wife for the first time on our wedding day and decided not to love her. For a year I never said a word to her, I hated her. Why? She's a village girl. I would have chosen a city girl. A village girl has no manners. I hated her movements, her clothes, everything about her. My mother tried to persuade me that she was a hard worker and capable of working for me in the kitchen and in the fields. I could think of nothing but repudiating her. But in the end I was forced to give in.

The wedding lasted three days. The second day, with my brothers and sisters, I went in a bullock-cart to my wife's village.

At Gurajmurta time (the time when we milk the cows), we went to the temple and I was able to see my wife. I had paper flowers on my head. Two Brahmins dropped the red sheet separating us, I offered her a coconut, she placed a garland

around my neck and we entered the temple.

That night I slept in my wife's house in a separate room. The third day, my wife came to our house. The ceremonies and the exchanging of gifts continued. The Brahmin recited the list of presents for hours, giving the names of people and the amount of their gifts.

After my marriage, my life changed less than I would have wanted it to change. I hoped that my father would allow me to buy a motorcycle, but we had no money. Still, I felt responsible: I had brought a new mouth to feed into the house and I had to work harder.

I go to the cinema in Poona once a year. The longest trip I ever took was to Koyana Dam, two hundred miles from here. I've also gone barefoot on the pilgrimage to Pandharpur.

I read the Poona paper every day to see what the politicians are doing. For example, I don't think it's a good idea that factories hire through influence. You have to bribe a clerk or a foreman to be recommended. There's too much favouritism.

What kind of régime is there in China and Russia? I don't know. What are the most important nations today? Australia, Germany and China, I think. Is France bigger than the United States? Yes, no doubt it is.

Khrushchev, Kennedy . . . no, I don't know those people. Communists? Yes, I've heard of them, I think they're a small group of very violent people and I don't like that. I've read that men have landed on the moon, I don't know from which country they came, but it sounds extraordinary to me.

In my opinion, the best system of all is the Congress Party which threw out the English, and Pandit Nehru is the man I admire most. Mr. Nehru is the leader of the nation, the way my father is the leader of the family.

Nowadays, I get up every morning at seven. My wife does not sleep with me because our youngest baby is only a few months old, but she gets up at four to make lunch for the farm servants. She brings me hot water, I wash, I drink my tea and then I go to prostrate myself on the tomb of the holy Jnanesvar and put flowers on it. By now it is ten o'clock, I eat *bakhri* with rice or lentils, then I go to the fields to see how the work is going. The orange trees are our biggest source of profit but we have the sowing and the harvesting of grain, potatoes, vegetables and so forth. At half past seven at night, I return home with the entire family, except for my brother and two servants who live all the time on the farm. I give them three hundred and fifty rupees a year plus their food (a bicycle costs two hundred and fifty).

At night I listen to the Poona radio programme, I talk with the neighbours, I read my paper or else I go and chew some betel at the house of my friend, Jnanesvar Mete, who happens to be a betel merchant. We talk about the farm and his business and events in the village.

My ambition is to become the richest farmer in the village, to be able to buy land, to take care of the education of my younger brothers and to make their last years easier for my parents, who went through sixteen years of hardship. Right now, I don't think very often about my wife and my two children. Of course, I'm often bored, but what else can I do besides stay here?

The daughter-in-law:
Lakshmi, Dattatraya's wife

My childhood was very ordinary. I lived in Taligao, a village of seventy houses, eighteen miles from here. My parents were poor farmers, they owned a few acres, six bullocks and six cows but, most of the time, my father worked for others. They paid him half the harvest. My mother was always working in the fields, threshing grain or picking potatoes. With my sisters, I played hopscotch, or we threw stones in the air. Until I was married I slept on the floor in my mother's blanket with my three sisters. I was married at the age of twelve.

When I was little, I went out a little more than now, and then they dressed me in skirts. I like that more than a sari. I once went to Pandharpur at the age of seven with my brothers and my parents. After that I had nightmares, I kept seeing gods in my dreams.

When I was nine my father wanted me to go to school. I was happy, the teacher didn't scold me, even when I stayed only an hour. Father told me: "This way, you will be able to read and you will get a better husband." I learned to read and write but I haven't got the time any more.

One day my mother said to me: "Lakshmi, some people from Alandi will come to look at you." Many of my friends were already married, but the others were sad at the thought that I too was going to leave. For you haven't got the right to see your girl friends after they marry, unless they happen to come back to the village. Thirteen men came with Datta's father. I had to keep my eyes lowered; I was very frightened. It lasted more than an hour. They asked me: "Where are you studying? In what school?" When Mother brought tea, I left. The wedding was held two weeks later. The other girls told me that their mothers-in-law were very strict and I wondered what mine would be like.

When I had my first child I went to my mother's house. The neighbour helped me. I didn't feel it very much. Now I have a son of four and a daughter four months old. I get up at four every day, I sweep the verandah and the street in front of the house, I make tea, I peel potatoes, I bake about thirty cakes, then I heat bath water for my brothers-in-law, my mother-in-law, my sisters-in-law and my sister-in-law's daughter. Then I go to the river to wash clothes: every day, five dhotis, two pairs of trousers, three bodices, one shirt and four saris. It takes an hour. I hurry, I haven't got time to gossip. I go home, I hang the laundry in the attic and then I eat alone with my mother-in-law without talking. My mother-in-law takes care of my children. I just nurse my baby six times a day.

I'm very bored from time to time, but whom can I talk to? With my sisters-in-law, I talk about cooking. There is nothing that I really enjoy. The Ganapati festival? What do I care about that? I never go out. I only go out into the fields at noon to take the men their food.

At first, I enjoyed the children, but I haven't got time to play with them. My mother-in-law and my brothers-in-law take them out, I hardly see them. My husband? He frightens me, he always gives me orders. He's nice to everyone except me. He never embraces me, he never says a kind word to me. . . . I suffer and I am afraid.

A wide variety of innovations, whether technological, artistic, or social, may directly or indirectly alter a particular society's way of living. Cultural change is as inevitable as it is dynamic. No society in the past has managed to avoid change, and no society in the future will be able to escape it. Twentieth-century inventions, improved communication systems, increased educational opportunities, and political-economic modifications are affecting the roles and relationships of men, women, and children throughout the world. Try to imagine the effects of modernization on the living patterns of Japanese families. Hundreds of thousands of women born on Japanese farms have recently migrated to the large cities where they now work in manufacturing plants or are housewives married to industrial workers. Think of the effects of television in rural Japan where new and different ways of living are viewed daily. Changes have been brought about by radical political experiments such as Communism in China and democracy in India. New laws have been introduced. Village women are now allowed to vote and to take part in local and national politics. In China, women have been formally declared "fully equal," and are expected to parallel the efforts of men in building a new China. Educational opportunities have been improved and expanded in the Philippine Islands.

The readings in this section provide evidence to indicate that in some ways the role of women is being modified throughout Asia. In studying the readings, consider the following questions: What kinds of role changes are taking place in Asian families? How intense are these changes? What causes such shifts in living patterns? What is the basis used for judging the desirability of such changes?

Reading thirteen†

The New Woman in India

The modern Indian woman, in many cases educated and gainfully employed, is no longer shackled to the home and wholly dependent on the decisions of others. The practice of *purdah*, or the protective seclusion of the woman from strangers, is dying out. The absolute obedience of the wife is no longer exacted as it had been for centuries. The traditional regulation that marriage be within the same caste has been relaxed, and the marriage union is no longer indissoluble. With the increasing independence of the Indian woman have come new attitudes towards her role not only as wife, but also as a political and social entity deserving of legal rights. Jyotirmoyee Sarma, an instructor of sociology at Cuttack University, considers marriage practices in present-day India and describes different aspects of the changing social and legal status of the Indian woman.

One of the greatest changes between my grandmother's time and mine is the acceptance of intercaste marriage in Hindu society at large. As women became free to attain higher education and entered the occupational fields in greater numbers, they were thrown more and more into contact with men. It was normal that many of them would want to marry the men they met, and in many instances the men would be of other castes. Such marriages were never accepted by their families with enthusiasm, but the greater independence of women and the greater frequency of such marriages began to force the issue. At the time of the marriage a formal renunciation of all religions was made, in accordance with the provision of the act of 1872, but it was taken very lightly, and the marrying parties did not consider themselves to be non-Hindus. Finally, in 1955, the Hindu Code Bill was passed by the Union Government. This bill gave recognition to intercaste marriage among Hindus. In secular marriages the declaration of having no religion was no longer necessary, and marriages performed with sacred rituals in the traditional manner but

† Jyotirmoyee Sarma, "Three Generations in My Calcutta Family," *Women in the New Asia*, ed. by Barbara Ward (UNESCO, 1963).

between members of different castes were held legal. Formerly the priests used to refuse to solemnize intercaste marriages. Even now the greater number of priests may object to doing so, but whenever such a marriage is planned someone can always be found who is willing to perform the ceremony.

Intercaste marriage with religious ceremonies takes place only when the families of both the parties are agreeable to the marriage, as the religious ceremonies demand that certain acts be performed by certain family members. Unless the families are willing to participate only secular marriages are possible, and the pair may have to suffer some difficulties until the families are reconciled to the situation. These days everybody expects that after the marriage the families will be at some time reconciled. In my household no intercaste marriage has as yet taken place, but in my mother's house one such marriage took place recently. Although it was known that the young couple were marrying of their own volition, arrangements were made as if it were a negotiated marriage, and invitations were sent out accordingly. Only members of three families did not come as against members of fifty or so other families who did come. Most of these guests did not want their children to marry in other castes, but they admitted that since such marriages have now become common in our society they had no objection to witnessing them.

Another great change that has been introduced in our society since 1955 concerns women's inheritance. In my grandmother's time, and even before that, women were expected to lead dependent lives. A woman who had many relations to look after her held herself to be fortunate. Parents expressed their concern for her by giving her in marriage to a family with the means of keeping her well. Since sons inherited their father's property, girls inherited only when they had no brothers. Marriage offered complete security to a girl, and as her formal ties with her parents were broken at marriage it was customary to give her a dowry including clothes, jewellery and money. The amount of the dowry depended on the ability of the parents. The jewellery was completely her personal property, and her husband had no right over it unless she gave it to him. Much value was, therefore, put on the possession of valuable jewellery by the women, as it could be exchanged for ready money in times of need. It is much easier to sell jewellery than it is to sell land or any other property.

The equality of women in educational and occupational fields brought about the feeling that the property rules should also be changed. In the new India, where adult franchise for both the sexes was ensured in the constitution, discrimination in the rights of inheritance could not be tolerated. The new code passed in 1955 gave girls the right to some share of their father's property. On the other hand, the giving of valuable jewellery to a girl at the time of her marriage is so much a part of the ceremony that up to now no family would think of denying a girl such gifts with the feeling that she would inherit some share of the joint household property instead. Jewellery completes the bride's wedding costume, and it is not only given by the parents, but by all relations and friends, and from members of the family that she is being married into, as

jewellery is meant to convey good wishes at the time of marriage. Married last year, my brother's wife received as much jewellery as my grandmother or my mother received in their time. In the long run, therefore, if girls are to inherit equally, the giving of dowries would become a problem, for girls would have a double advantage. Legislation to stop dowries and expensive gifts at the time of marriage was lately being considered in the Indian Parliament, but as there was much doubt as to how to execute such a law, the matter has been put aside for the present. Actually, such changes can come about only when the people themselves introduce the changes, and not by the passing of laws. So even though laws have been passed to give women rights to their father's property, I would say that not much change has taken place in this field between my grandmother's time and mine, although my mother and I can vote whereas my grandmother could not.

The nature of our joint household was much the same as that of other households in our society, and the changes we faced were experienced by all. I may point out again that the greatest changes have come about in the political, educational and occupational spheres, less in marriage and family relations, and the least in property inheritance.

All social changes are interrelated, and it is to be expected that changes in one element of society would necessarily be accompanied by changes in the other elements. Changes come most easily in matters which are least sentimentally evaluated by the society. The voting rights of women are accepted without any hesitation. The attainment of higher education by girls was easier than their entrance into occupational fields where they come into contact and competition with men. Yet the undertaking of careers by women was more easily accepted than their selection of their own husbands and their taking the initiative for their own marriage. Even now individuals marrying of their own choice try to make it look as if their families negotiated the marriage for them, and a girl marrying of her own will does not normally expect to live away from her husband's kinfolk. As a matter of fact, it is because she passes so completely into her husband's family that the need for equal rights of inheritance has not been as hardly pressed as it would have been otherwise. A woman still gets a great deal of protection from her husband's family members if she becomes a widow. And then if she has no one to look after her in her husband's house, she can come to live in her father's house as in the past. In the past it has often been that if a woman inherited property, because she had no brothers, she looked on it as belonging to her sons rather than to herself, and she may still feel like this even now if she inherits through the new laws. The security of property rights is needed mainly when a woman has to make her place in the world all alone. In the past it has been the lot—and the good fortune—of the Indian woman to have a great many kin relations; what she may have to face in the future we can only wait and see.

Reading fourteen†

A Career-Minded Mother in Ceylon

The women in the upper and middle classes of the Indian subcontinent, after a history of active participation in struggles against colonial rule, are now emerging as a socially responsible and politically aware segment of society. A relatively high number of women hold public office in India today. In 1960 Ceylon elected the world's first woman prime minister, Mrs. Bandaranaike, and in 1966 Mrs. Indira Gandhi became the prime minister of India. B. Siriwardena, the author of the following reading, represents another example of the enterprising, self-directed woman emerging on the Indian subcontinent.

I was given in marriage in 1956 at the age of 27 to my husband, who was 30 at the time. The marriage was arranged by my parents, but subject to my consent. My husband is a Food and Drugs Inspector, educated in Ceylon and England. Dowry was not asked or given at our marriage, which was an orthodox Ceylonese Buddhist ceremony but for the fact that it was held at a public hall. We are of the same caste and religion.

We live with my own mother and her family in Kandy, an arrangement which is very convenient for me as our baby daughter, who was born within a year after our marriage, can stay happily at home—where she is everyone's pet—while I continue with my university work.

Immediately after graduation I took to the teaching profession, the vocation I had chosen ever since I was a little pupil under my great father; and I acquired the diploma in education at the University of Ceylon three years after graduation and on the eve of my marriage. My husband soon understood my desire to continue to learn and, as he was convinced that I would not assume undue independence, he allowed, and indeed encouraged, me to start reading for the M.A. in Education. This I am now doing. I travel daily to the university in my own car, which I drive myself. My husband takes pride in my work, even in the face of some criticism from his colleagues. I have not seen a husband more interested in his wife's continuing to study, even denying for himself much of the attention traditionally due from a wife.

† B. S. Siriwardena, "The Life of Ceylon Women," *Women in the New Asia*, ed. by Barbara Ward (UNESCO, 1963).

But although I have a certain amount of independence which most women in Ceylon do not enjoy, this does not mean that I have deviated much from the ideal pattern of the wife and mother. My position at home follows very much the traditional pattern. My husband decides all important matters, and often it is acceptable to me. He commands and I obey. Except on scholarly matters it is not for me to argue with him. I have to accept the fact that he knows best and that this is all for my own good. I never go out or do anything outside the precincts of the home without his permission. But we do discuss important matters together, although the tendency is for him to decide finally. I feel quite happy and secure in this manner.

We have no special preference for either sons or daughters, and when our daughter was born we were both happy. She is given the comforts that we can afford, by way of food, clothing, toys and attention. As a rule once we are back home for the day after work, we give her our company and it is seldom that we leave her to go out for an evening. We should feel sorry to deprive her of our company then. She loves to play and talk to us.

We hope to give her the best education available in this country, and later even in England if she turns out to be enterprising and interested. We shall leave it to her whether or not to choose a career or what career to choose. Whether she has a career or not, we wish to see her happily married to an intelligent, educated, good-natured, well-mannered and understanding Ceylonese Buddhist. Provided these characteristics are there we do not mind her making the choice of the young man without allowing us to arrange her marriage.

Education of women is strongly encouraged by the Indian government. This is one of the numerous open-air schools where women and children learn how to read.

Reading fifteen†

A Chinese Family in Singapore

The domination-submission pattern of the traditional Asian marriage is slowly changing. Man and wife are beginning to move towards roles of equal status with the consequence that married life now includes an element of companionship such as has been known and idealized in much of the West. Formerly, the husband and wife were surrounded by the extended family group and saw relatively little of each other. A close relationship between man and wife was even discouraged in many Asian societies. The outspoken attitude between marriage partners described in this reading was virtually unknown in past years.

My husband and I are more free and at ease with one another in our marriage relationship than were our grandparents-in-law. We address each other by name and treat each other as equals. This was definitely not so with them. Overt affection between them was not displayed, even in the family circle. Their behaviour towards each other was stiff. My parents-in-law were less stiff but still formal; my mother-in-law in her early married days could not call my father-in-law by his name, but had to address him by the same term as a servant would use. Now in her late fifties, she still does not call him by name, but follows his children in calling him Ah Bah (i.e., Father). Like other English-educated Singapore-born Chinese, my husband takes me to parties organized in the European style with dancing and sitting-out in mixed company. Even now some of the men and women of a generation above us prefer to sit separately at dinner parties and public or social gatherings.

There is much evidence all round us that the traditional pattern of behaviour between husband and wife has undergone some modification in response to the changed social conditions of overseas society in the mid-twentieth century. We are also more outspoken to each other, and mature enough to discuss birth control and practise it accordingly. In Singapore, family planning is officially recognized and recommended by the government. I am a strong advocate of family planning, and am never too busy to explain to anyone

† Foong Won, "A Chinese Family in Singapore," *Women in the New Asia*, ed. by Barbara Ward (UNESCO, 1963).

who wishes to know about it. This was unheard of in my grandmother's days, but it was not unknown to my own parents, who are more advanced than many of their generation. My mother has had six children and I have two. My husband and I believe in quality rather than quantity of children. We have limited the size of our family in order to have a higher standard of living, and to enable us to give our children a good education to equip them in life. We hope they will make the grade and become useful and economically independent citizens. Unfortunately for my husband, my father-in-law did not believe in professional training and so was not prepared to spend money on his education. He only thought of putting his son into the family business. The university education my husband went through was due to a scholarship.

My having only two sons and no daughter caused a certain amount of uninvited comment and advice from the relatives of both sides. They said that there should be 'ins' and 'outs' (daughter-in-law marrying in and daughter marrying out respectively), and that daughters are more attached to their mother than sons. My own opinion is I have no preference for either sex and am thankful to God for His blessings.

I wish to digress a little and contrast my own parents' family with my husband's family. Unlike my father-in-law, my father encouraged his children—sons and daughters alike—to study hard. He is not a rich man. But as he did not indulge in the distasteful practice of acquiring secondary wives, he could afford to give four of his children a college education. Except for my youngest sister who is staying with my parents and my grandmother, all of us are married. My mother is modern in outlook, as evidenced by her attitude towards her two daughters-in-law. She did not mind very much when they hinted that they would like to live separately from her. This was a departure from the traditional pattern of family organization. (In my own case, if I had not consented to live with my in-laws it would have caused some ill-feeling.) My own grandmother was not happy about such arrangements at first, but my mother cheered her up by saying 'they will surely come and see us'. My first brother and his wife are both doctors, and he is provided with quarters about a mile away from my parents' home. My sister, a university graduate teacher, and her husband, also live by themselves. Both my sister and first sister-in-law are working—thus showing that the more education and economic opportunities they have, the more duties and responsibilities they shoulder. Each of them employs two servants, one for housework and the other to look after the two children. With no mother-in-law problem, they have instead a servant problem, particularly with that all-important figure, the baby amah.[1] The baby amah is an indispensable and bossy person in such a simple modern household and she knows it. 'She is like my mother-in-law' is the usual cry of many a young wife. Nevertheless, baby amahs must be tolerated for the sake of the very young children left at home while their mothers have gone out to work. Fortunately domestic servants are readily available in Singapore, but they are by no means cheap and a good one is difficult to get.

1. The equivalent of a "nanny."

Reading sixteen†

Six College Girls in Communist China

The Marriage Act, passed in 1950 by the Chinese Communist regime, declared that man and wife would be fully equal. Through many kinds of programs, the women of Communist China have been taught to regard the past status of women as one of horror and "feudal" depravity, and that they should have equal status with men. The efforts of the Communist regime to liberate the Chinese women have gone hand in hand with the effort to have them participate fully in the economic life of China.

Hu Ying led me down a willow-lined path to a girls' dormitory, a long brick building with a simulated tile roof and numerous casement windows. Two girls in maroon slacks and white cotton pullovers, their hair braided, were hanging laundered underwear on the unpainted wooden stairway banisters. They looked up and laughed confusedly. The student house chairman appeared and led us to the second floor, where some girls skipped past, their long hair damp from a shower.

"Is it all right to just walk in like this—?"

"They're expecting us," said Mr. Hu. The house chairman cried out our arrival and mobilized girls in half a dozen rooms that were in order; she invited me to inspect any of them. I looked into two or three, and their occupants bowed invitingly. Then a girl with an engaging smile above two pigtails called out, "*Wo-men ch'ing nin tao li-pien lai,*" welcoming me to visit them, and three roommates behind her nodded affirmation.

Inside were two sets of doubled-tiered bunks in a room ten feet by twelve. Under the French windows and between the bunks was a work table covered with a white cloth and on it stood a small lamp and the usual teapot and statuette of Mao Tse-tung. Under the bunks was just enough space to store the regulation small canvas or wooden traveling boxes which contained the girls' personal belongings. There were two cheap chairs and another small table. From the white walls in rough plaster hung a few dresses, slacks and coats. Overhead there was one unshaded light bulb.

The girl who had beckoned to me was slightly pockmarked and not very pretty, but she radiated personality. She had bright, merry, bold eyes—not so much

† Edgar Snow, *The Other Side of the River: Red China Today* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1962).

bold as direct. Women of her province, Honan, are not shy or cringing but are noted for their independence. Most Honanese women are also large and deliberate in their movements, but this girl was diminutive and quick; she was Chiang Chu-hsing.

I asked the same questions of six girls who crowded into the room and here quote their answers, from my notes.

First (Chiang): Born near Chengchow (northern Honan, central China). Age twenty-two. Daughter of poor tenant peasants. Neither could read or write; mother now just able to read Small Lightning's letters. Two brothers, one sister. During childhood Chiang Chu-hsing worked as a scullery maid in local landlord's house. One year's schooling before "liberation" (1949), when she was eleven. "Liberation"

These young Chinese students passed some difficult examinations to enter the university. The Communist regime gave women equal educational rights, but less than a million students (men and women) were enrolled in colleges and universities in the 1960's.

obviously had literal meaning for her. She had worn only rags till then. She remembered a famine year of a diet of tree bark. Never owned a dress. (Now owns three.) Her parents got some land and security; she was sent to school; life completely changed, "like crossing a bridge to heaven." Worked hard, with party support. Now a sophomore, three years older than average in her class. Will graduate at twenty-six. She belongs to the Communist Youth League.

Second (Ho): Born Hopei province (where Peking is situated). Age nineteen. Parents small landlords; left home and went to Tangshan, mining town on the Hopei coast, during war. Land confiscated; they stayed in Tangshan. Now both parents work in factory there. "They like it."

Third (Lin): Born Hunan (South China). Age nineteen. Pretty girl. Daughter of small landlords. Land redistributed—taken by village cooperative. Parents went through six months of "re-education" and then rejoined community. No discrimination against her? (She would have been a small child at the time.) Not at all, she says. Went through regular schools, won place at institute on high scholarship after close examination. Now in her third year.

Fourth (Sung): Born Kiangsu (where Shanghai is located). Age twenty. Father an "intellectual." Meaning, middle school teacher. Nonparty but helped revolution. He now teaches in Yangchow. Three younger brothers. She is sophomore—and a Young Communist.

Fifth (Wang): Born Shantung (east coast). Age twenty. Third year. Father a railway worker. Two brothers, also railway workers, both party men.

Sixth (Hsu): Hopei girl, age eighteen. Father was scavenger—peddler of coal balls (made of coal scrap) in Tientsin. After liberation he became skilled worker. Mother and father both work in factories, have good three-room apartment, new building, living "better than ever dreamed."

"Why did you choose to become engineers?" Some answers:

"We want to build socialism." "Heavy industry is the foundation of socialism." "We want to build China into a strong, modern nation and help the world get rid of imperialist oppression." "Engineers are the spine of a modern nation."

"Those answers are out of a book," I said. "Before you ever heard of heavy industry, socialism or imperialism, you must have formed an ambition. I met a nurse at a hospital recently who told me she had begun to long to be a nurse from the moment when, as a small child, she first saw a woman wearing a cool, crisp, clean white uniform, 'looking like one of the immortals.' Don't any of you remember wanting to be an engineer before you knew the country needed them?"

Small Lightning spoke up, the most articulate of the group.

"When I was a very small girl I saw a truck for the first time in my life. I said, 'I'd like to drive that truck.' My older brother laughed at me. For a long time I was determined to be a truck driver. After liberation, going to and from school, I saw many trucks, tractors and bulldozers working on a dam but I saw that it was the engineers who told them what to do, and where to put their loads. I knew that I couldn't compete with those strong men driving bulldozers, but by using my brains I could become an engineer."

"Many men would say that women shouldn't be engineers," I said provocatively, "especially iron and steel specialists. The work is too tough. Research, draftsmanship, building design, maybe, but can women really do the heavy jobs?"

They all heatedly asserted that they did everything men students did. There was a tendency to give them light work but they all did their time at the furnaces, the same carrying work, the same risks; they wanted complete equality in work assignments. Did I know who was the first volunteer to carry a cable across the Yellow River rapids at San Men Hsia at the start of the big dam there? A woman engineer!

They were beginning to boil when I apologized by saying that I had already heard from factory chiefs and engineers that women make better operators of heavy-duty cranes than men and are more reliable at tasks where a precise sense of timing may mean the difference between life and death. I quickly put myself on record as being in favor of women engineers.

"I hope you will admit," I said, shifting to safer ground, "that two sexes are better than one. Better a two-sex institute than a one-sex institute, for example? There must be advantages in being a girl student in an institute with nine males for every female?"

Nobody denied that coeducation was a good thing. "Much better than an all-girls' school." "Very nice!" "Sex doesn't come into our work here. We are all engineers!" "There is no sex discrimination here."

"Do many girls get married while they are students?"

"Very few. Usually we get married right after graduation." The others laughed at the pretty Hunanese girl, Miss Lin, who said that. "You mean *you're* going to get married," they said. Student marriages were distinctly discouraged now. Although the legal age for marriage is twenty for men and eighteen for women, these young ladies considered the "correct" age to be at least twenty-two or twenty-three for a man and twenty or twenty-one for a woman.

They said they usually dated for Saturday night dances, for Sunday walks, for games or sports like swimming. They often paired up on "teams" for field-work assignments. "We have most of our fun in collective living rather than dating."

Mr. Hu had gone off somewhere, so I asked my interpreter's advice about whether anyone would be offended if I asked their views on birth control. He thought I might try.

"Do any of you object to family planning?"

"Certainly not," said Miss Chiang. The rest looked blank.

"Let me put it this way. How many children do you intend to have when you get married?"

"That won't be my decision alone but my husband's—and the needs of socialism," said the Shantung girl. "Personally, I think two are enough."

"Two!" "Three!" "Two!" The small family was definitely preferred.

"What if you have two or three and they're all daughters? Won't you need at least one boy?"

"That's feudal thinking! We don't make such distinctions any more," said the little Honanese spokesman. They all joined in pouncing on the old attitude that males have superior value.

Conclusions

1. How has the Asian woman's traditional role and status in family and society differed from the American woman's role and status?

2. What are some of the major forces accounting for the development of the Asian woman's traditional role in her family and society?

3. What examples show that the woman's role is changing in Asia? Why do such changes occur?

4. What is the basis for determining whether or not a particular act by an Asian man, woman, or child is moral or immoral?

Suggested Readings

Benedict, Ruth. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword,* Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1946.
This investigation of the patterns of Japanese culture prior to World War II is considered outdated by those concerned with contemporary Japan. The book, however, is a fine springboard for beginning a serious study of Asian cultures.

Mace, David and Vera. *Marriage East and West,* Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959.
This is the most complete treatment of courtship, marriage, and family relations in Asia for the lay reader. The style is journalistic and entertaining.

Markandaya, Kamala. *Nectar in a Sieve*, New York: The John Day Company, Inc., 1954.
This fictional account describes the life of an Indian woman who manages to overcome many hardships in raising her family. It is an extremely readable and moving view of Indian life by a capable Indian writer. Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth,* which describes life in China before 1930, is a good companion volume.

Norbeck, Edward. *Changing Japan,* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1965.
This 82-page booklet is from the anthropological series edited by George Spindler at Stanford University. While designed for academic use, Norbeck's perceptive fictional case study of two Japanese families is thoroughly readable.

Ward, Barbara, ed. *Women in the New Asia,* UNESCO, 1963.
This is probably the most valuable book available for researching the changing roles of women in South and Southeast Asia. Approximately twenty women from various Asian nations discuss changing conditions and family relationships in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Date Due

DUE DE 9'78

DEC 7 RETURN

EDUC AP 30 '78

APR 26 RETURN

DUE EDUC FEB 6'78

DUE Educ FEB 12'78

RETURNED FEB 12'78

DUE EDUC NOV 13'85

DUE EDUC NOV 20'85

NOV 18 RETURN

DS 509-3 A83 UNIT III V-3
ASIAN STUDIES INQUIRY PROGRAM

39441170 CURR

0000186712 14

RECOMMENDED FOR USE
IN ALBERTA SCHOOLS

EDUCATION
CURRICULUM

971063

DS 509.3 A83 Unit III v.3
Asian studies inquiry program.
0346545E CURR

CURRICULUM
EDUCATION LIBRARY

A22150

John U. Michaelis

Robin J. McKeown

Coordinators
Asian Studies Inquiry Program

Field Educational Publications
A Subsidiary of Field Enterprises, Incorporated

325227